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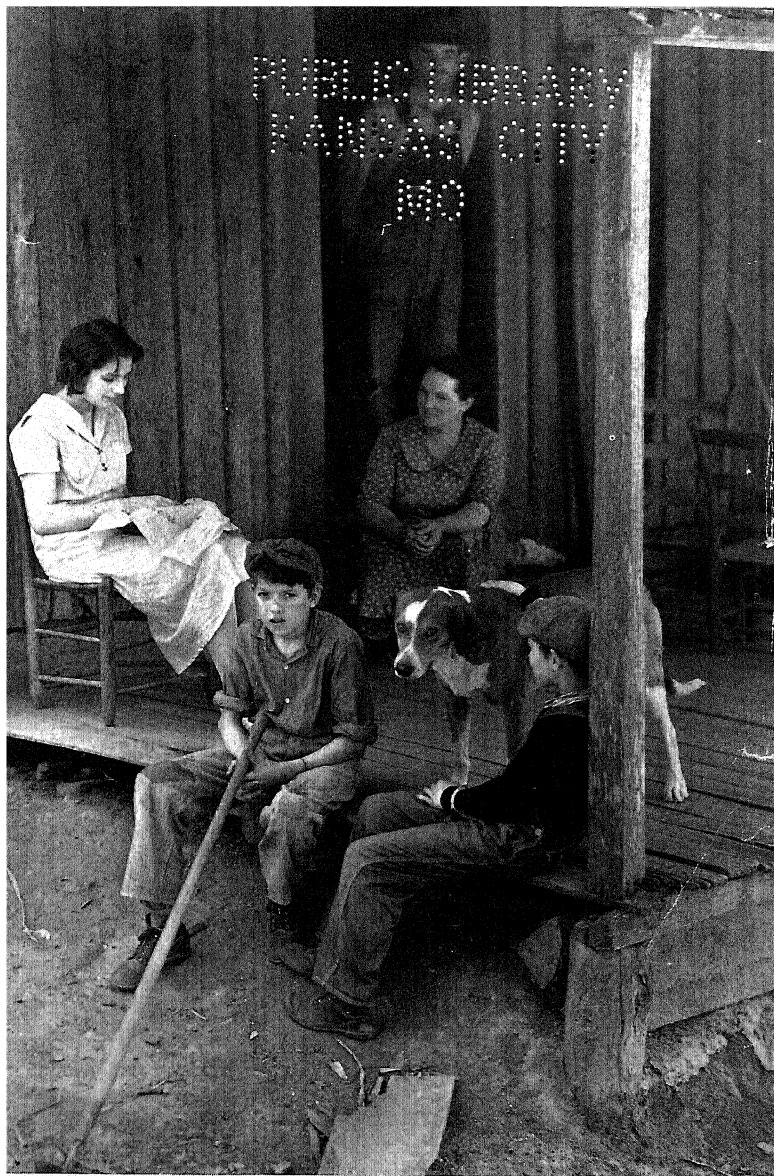
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Backwoods America



THE RAREST OF ALL MODERN LUXURIES, IDLE TIME WITHOUT CHRONIC
UNEMPLOYMENT



LIFE IS ESSENTIALLY A MATTER OF SUNSHINE AND STORM, OF GROWTH AND REST,
THE PROGRESS OF SEASONS, THE CHANGING OF SKIES, TRANSACTIONS OF THE LONG-
ESTABLISHED FIRM OF SUN, RAIN, AND EARTH

Backwoods America

By

Charles Morrow Wilson

with illustrations by

Bayard Wootten

Chapel Hill

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WESTPORT

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TO MY MOTHER

MATTIE MORROW WILSON

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Backwoods America

I

AMERICAN PEASANTS

I KNOW a land of Elizabethan ways, an America of cavaliers and curtsies, a land of mystic allegiances and enduring frontiers, where moods of yesterday touch hands with probable ways of tomorrow. Smooth, timbered hills painted green-golden by the magic of sunlight. Hillsides and green valleys, lost ravines and forest lands. Clear rivers, fast running and gay. Farm roads that smile in good fellowship. Fence-rows, open fields, and a comforting, life-giving earth.

As my neighbor Bill Coldiron puts it, "Life is good hereabouts, because a man don't keep eternally in a sweat about things."

I am speaking of my homeland, the backhill Ozarks of Arkansas and Missouri. This particular haven of peasantry happens to be my America. It is a centrally placed stronghold for proprietary farms and homestead living. During my pleasurable years of association with this and other rural Americas, I have become thoroughly con-

vinced that Ozarkadia provides a splendid laboratory from which to study the true living ways and resources of the nation's peasant domain. If I am certain of anything at all, I am certain that good yeomen the country over, for that matter the world over, hold a vast deal in common. So I ponder upon this peasantry, confident that I am close to the true heart of agrarian America; for mine is a world that is today and yesterday and very probably tomorrow, all in one.

Hereabouts, farm people are long-settled descendants of first immigrants from Elizabethan England, a nation of life coming into full prime. Husbandmen and plowmen of Shakespeare's England could very probably rub shoulders and swap yarns with them, and suffer few misunderstandings, lingual or otherwise.

"All the corn we make our bread of, groweth on our own demesne ground. The flesh we eat is all (or the most part) of our own breeding. Our garments, also, or much thereof, made within our house. Our own malt and water maketh our drink."

Thus went an English country gentleman's boast of self-sufficiency over three and a half centuries ago. Hereabouts, it is much the same. The landholder gambles squarely upon the benevolence of soil, growth, and weather. He plants, hunts, and harvests with the basic idea of self-sufficiency. His wife cooks, churns, makes the clothes, and keeps the home.

Thomas Tusser says of good husbandmen in Old England that they

Look weekly, of custom and right
For roast meat on Sundays and Thursdays at night.

And Nicholas Breton says of English country food:

We have . . . corn in the garner, cheese in the loft, milk in the dairy, cream in the pot, butter in the dish, ale in the tub, and *Aqua vitae* in the bottle, beef in the brine, brawn in the sowce, and bacon in the roof, herbs in the garden, and water at our doors . . . what in God's name can we desire to have more?

The food of our 1934 peasant offers an appetizing parallel.

Of the harvest merry-making Breton says,

Then the sun dries up the standing ponds . . . now begin the gleaners to follow the corn cart, and a little bread to a great deal of drink makes the traveller's dinner. . . .

The pipe and the tabor is now lustily set on work, and the lad and the lass will have no lead on their heels. The new wheat makes the gossip cake, and the bride cup is carried above the heads of the whole parish. The furmenty pot welcomes home the harvest cart and a garland of flowers crowns the captain of the reapers. . . . The young folks, smiling, kiss at every turning, . . . [There is] a banquet of curds and cream, with a cup of old nappy ale. . . . After casting of sheep's eyes, and faith and troth for a bargain, clapping of hands are seals to the truth of

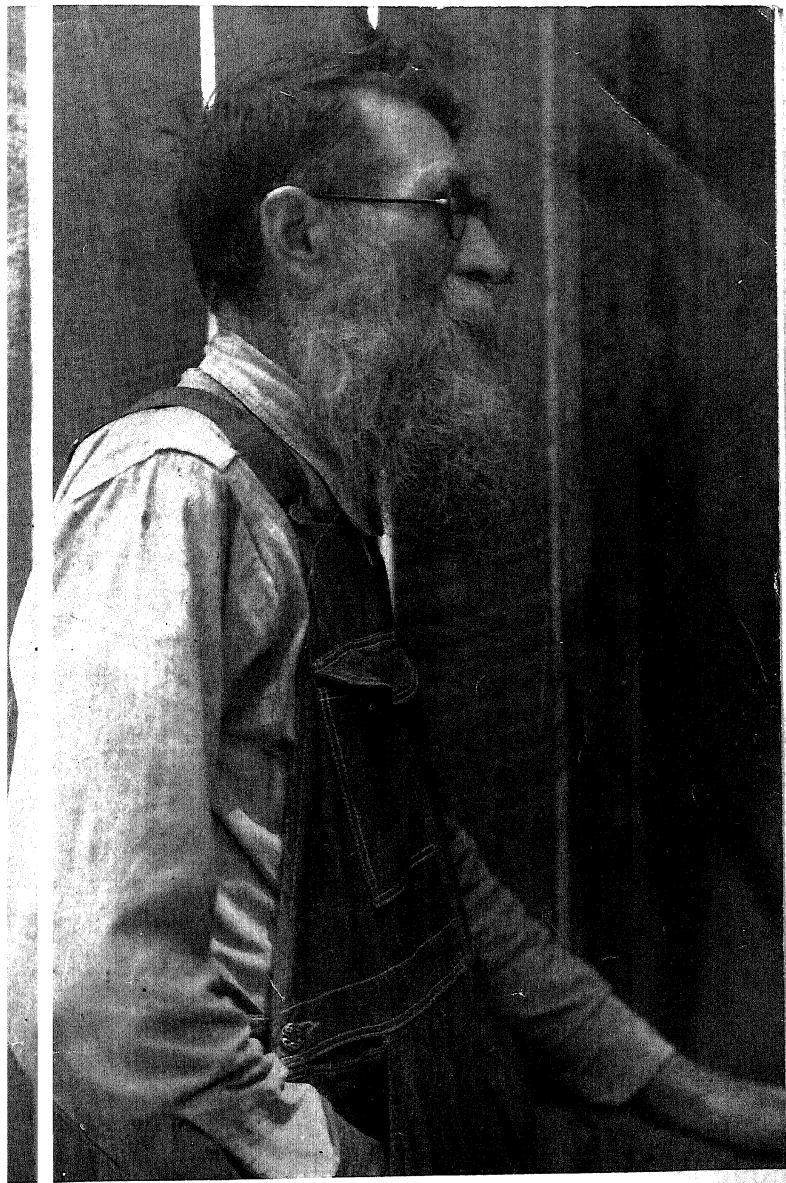
hearts, when a pair of gloves and a handkerchief are as good as the best obligation, with a cap and a courtsey, hie ye home maids to milking, and so merrily goes the day away.

In Ozarkadia, as in various other peasant realms, October brings the corn harvest and the end of the tenant's year. But tilling is usually finished by early August and so corn huskings, county fairs, and circuses provide the uplander autumnal daytime diversion. Then comes the regular run of the season's merry-making—play-parties, dances, quiltings, house warmings, candy pullings, 'possum hunts.

The life is essentially a matter of sunshine and storm, growth and rest, the progress of seasons, the changing of skies, transactions of the long-established firm of Sun, Rain, and Earth. The basic hypotheses are bounded by apples and firewood, a smoke-house full of pork joints, a crib of corn, and a treasury of chewing tobacco for the winter.

Oldish ways linger. Surface soil is washed away by riotous spring floods. Bridle paths are washed into gulleys. Old roads pass into grass-grown oblivion. There are abandoned villages, and villages lost, gray citadels of hay carts and strolling pigs. In a way it is an old man's country, a civilization begun by hands long in the grave.

Yet it is also a frontier, enduring and invincible, a country of landowning, small-acreage farmers who treat



A COUNTRY OF LANDOWNING, SMALL-ACREAGE FARMERS WHO TREAT LIFE WELL AND
WHO ARE TREATED WELL BY LIFE

THE COUNTRY IS
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ERATIONS



life well and who are treated well by life. Its people continue to make livings from the soil, just as they have been doing since the first coming of white pioneers, and just as they likely will be doing when our grandchildren are tottering old men.

True, it is a frontier that holds such modern realities as numbered highways, ventilated schoolhouses, automobiles, wayside markets and lighted streets. The towns have colleges, arcades, and depots. But the towns are almost entirely dependent upon farming realms and backhills, not only for their commercial life, but for the lion's share of their human interest. Earth and men build the dominating interest.

The country is not new to settlement. Its farm lands have given nurture and fair lives to five or six generations of land tillers. But it has kept its frontier temperament. In saying this, I repeat that to me "frontier" involves a double assumption: first, plentiful and readily available farm land; secondly, a widespread craving to occupy such land, plus a willingness to till and cherish the land when it is taken.

My friend Tom Puddister, who used to be a railroad conductor in New Jersey, decided one day to take a fling at frontiering in this Ozarkadia. His first stop brought him to the unconquered wilds of Taney County, Missouri, where he traveled the best part of a day without sighting

a human being, not even a tourist. He settled. But before the year was finished workmen came into his countryside and started building a highway.

Tom Puddister sighed and started packing again. His next stop was in Newton County, Arkansas, at a lost world called Hemmed-in Holler, where there aren't any passable roads, and probably never will be. So he homesteaded a quarter section and raised another cabin.

That was about ten years ago. Tom is still there, hale and hearty, monarch of a magnificent realm and bothered by no misgivings. His views and living ways are those of an own son of the soil. His accepted philosophy is one of sane appreciation of soil and growth, and adoration of being, without the worries and strivings of becoming.

But, like a true peasant, he isn't particularly given to talking about it. He gains vastly more pleasure, for example, from seeing a winter's sunset, or a hayfield in moonlight, or a pasture land in late April, than he does from an oral or a written discourse, however eloquent, upon their beauty.

Tom Puddister has become as thorough a man of earth as I know. And I contend that any section of country, or any mode of establishment, with personality forceful enough to change a New Jersey conductor to a relevant part of itself, all in a decade's time, certainly proves a forceful environment, and a solvent one.

Tom Puddister is a new frontiersman, but a certain

Sammy Blankhall is a native frontiersman who impresses me as typifying the straight-grained moral timber, not only of Ozarkadia, but also of the American peasantry generally.

Sammy is a dwarf. Folks reckoned he would probably grow to five feet, but he fell an inch or two short of it, and he never gained much more than a hundred pounds of weight.

For better than thirty years, he kept a crossroads store, and did well enough, until one day the store burned. There was no insurance, and at sixty-four Sammy found himself jobless, penniless, and in debt for a good many hundreds of dollars.

Not long ago Sammy showed me into the one-room log cabin which he calls home. In a far corner there was a wooden bin piled high with hulled black walnuts. Sammy explained that since he is no longer strong enough to wield a chopping axe, and lacks the heft to do farming, he is paying off his debt by picking out black walnut kernels and selling them to town confectioners. He figures that in three or four more years, provided the walnut crops are good, he will have the account straightened.

Sammy Blankhall is a true son of a true environment. Straightforward dealings and plain honesty are the dominant humors of his land.

Plain honesty and straightforward dealings are not necessarily easy. When lean crops come, regardless of

markets, times turn hard. Uncle Dulcimer Leary was speaking of vital economics:

"I was borned and brought up in Kaintuck. But when me and my wife got married, I says to her, 'Well, Honey, I reckon we couldn't worst ourselves much, so we mought go to Arkansas.' So by golly we went.

"That was better than sixty years ago, and since then they's been good times and bad times—most of 'em good. But one year I recollect, spring rains come late. Bad washin' floods till June. After that the corn plants parched up with dryness, and the sun scorched up all the garden stuff. Autumn come early, and on top it a hard bad winter.

"By Christmas time we was plum out of victuals. We'd watched ever'thing go 'way, pork joints, pertaters, dried peaches, cabbage kraut—ever'thing. Then one bitterish cold mornin' I come to the last scoopful of corn. So I scooped it up, and blowed out the dust, and poured the corn into a hand mill and ground it. Then my woman made up a pone of bread, and when the bread was et, there warn't nary another bite in the house. So I come to her and says:

"'Judy, we're plum out of anything to eat.'

"She says, 'I know we are,' and sot down and had a cry. So then I says,

"'Then I reckon I'll have to go and borry.' So then I went down to the head of the holler where there was a

outlander livin,' a feller named Gupshaw, that had come to hawg farm. I says to him,

"'Squire,' I says, 'do you mind if I borry a turn of meal?' By that I meant just a little bagful to lay over the horse's withers. He says, 'Well, Dulcimer, I shore would lend it to you, only I just don't see no perticular chance for you ever payin' it back.'

"Well I turned around and tramped back home. And when I'd told Judy, we both sot down about ready to cry. So I went out again, that time to old Jedge Trickle Bass, and I says to him, 'Jedge, I'd like for to borry a turn of meal.' He says, 'Shore, Dulcimer, just go out the corn crib and he'p yourself.'

"So I done it, and next fall I cotched him in the same shape that I was in then, and I shore done him right."

Since then, Uncle Dulcimer has kept with a policy of self-sustenance. He plants and crops with that underlying idea: corn for making meal and hominy and for fattening livestock; hay and corn fodder for winter feeding; apples for drying and for cellar storage; cabbage and beans and potatoes enough for the winter; onions and burney peppers for seasoning; cured pork, home-rendered lard, and homemade soap. He likewise makes his own contraptions—single and double trees, plow harness, gate latches, shelves, shalves, bean-sifter, rakes, hoe and axe handles, brooms and mauls. He stays with fences, built of split rails or brush. The other day, when I chanced

to pass his cabin, I found Uncle Dulcimer building one of the latter variety:

"It's not such a bodaciously good fence, but it's a heap better than no fence a-tall. It can't eggs-actly keep a stray cow out, but it shore can discourage her from passin' through."

Uncle Dulcimer's philosophy is as Elizabethan as his way of living, in that it is both proverbial and speculative. Like Launcelot Gobbo, he is inclined to agree that "it was not for nothing that my nose fell a-bleeding on Black Monday last at six o'clock in the morning." In the same spirit that the Elizabethan peasant might have prescribed the blood of an elephant mingled with the ashes of a mouse for the cure of leprosy, or the avenging power of a wax figure of an enemy pierced through with a needle and put to melt before a fire, so would Uncle Dulcimer drive a spike through the heart of a tree in order to make the tree fruitful, or devise tonics and healing potions from cobwebs and iron rust. Here is a personal recitation of Ozark omens:

"Doc Elders was walkin' along and decided to stop into a cabin and get a light for his tobacco pipe. When he went in he come acrost a little child that was kickin' an screamin' because it was bewitched.

"So Doc told the folks to get him nine new pins that hadn't never been stuck into cloth, and a empty bottle. They done it, and he dropped the pins in the bottle and

set it on the mantel-shelf. Then he got a oak shingle and drew a picture of a old woman on it, and told the little child's Pa to set the shingle up ag'in a stump and shoot it jest as the sun went down.

"Well, he done like he was told, and about a week after that old Doc come by ag'in, and asked after the little child that was plum well, and also had anybody died suddenly. They told him that a old woman acrost the holler had died with a shriek when the man shot the picture with his rifle gun. And that bottle on the mantel-shelf busted into a thousand pieces, and they never did find ary one of them pins."

Old ways live on in the farther back spaces. Old-timers live out enjoyable years without getting many miles from their birthplaces. Bill Coldiron, who lives just up the lane from me, has done considerable thinking about distances and places. Bill allows that when he dies he would naturally like to go to heaven. But in course of ethereal transit, he would relish a brief detour to either Little Rock or St. Louis, which would give a chance for looking over a city.

There is still a scattering of good Americans who never used a telephone. Uncle Homer Mullinix from down on Hazel Creek never had. One day he tramped into Fayetteville to make his will, and the old lawyer let him have a try at the phone. Uncle Homer proceeded to call over the cowpasture line to the Brentwood store, where

his wife had gone for a turn of groceries. Just as he took down the receiver, lightning struck the wire.

“Yass, it’s her all right!”

In this backwoods America, which is surprisingly large and far-spread, you may be wandering along a farm road which shows no intentions of going anywhere in particular, when all at once the road widens and there you are in Red Star, or Nellie’s Apron, or Eagle Rock, or some other unmapped hamlet. You usually know the town by its store, since the store is very likely the town as well.

At crossroads stores you find old countrymen who have outlived their working spans; farmers bent on spending an idle afternoon at pleasant talk; youths reckoning to overhear the talk of wise and knowing men; farm wives come to barter and delve with pin money.

Personally I am a long-addicted fancier of crossroads stores. I like to be around them. My chosen pose is leaning upon awning posts. Not long ago I picked the wrong post. It came loose at the top and there I was falling straight down.

The storekeeper was sympathetic and said that he would surely take me on into the next town except for the fact that the motor out of his auto was spread all over his parlor and front bedroom. So I seated myself on a counter and extended the visit.

Then the storekeeper’s hound dog strolled in, showing

a confiding nature, along with a peculiar bluntness of chest.

"He got a little blunt-chested from pushin' hisself after rabbits when he was a puppy."

Then the owner added appreciatively,

"But he's a mighty smart dawg. I first figgered to name him Dan'l Webster. But after he took to trailin' rabbits, I changed it to Al Smith. He oftentimes catches another rabbit from the one he starts out after. Besides that, when he gets with a pack of dawgs, he sets out trailin'. Then he takes the lead and hollers so loud that the rest of the pack can't think to trail, and so they just foller him.

"Then after a while the trail will make a sharp turn. Whenever it does, this dawg slows up and lets the rest of the pack go stavin' on past him. Then he drops back and takes up the trail again to hisself, and if it's something he can ketch, he ketches it."

I agreed that the dog was well named.

Just now I am talking of one particular bit of the surviving American frontier, which I believe to be honestly typical of farther-spread and far vaster hinterlands. During the past eight years, it has been my fortune to prepare scores and double-scores of newspapers and magazine articles, reports, and surveys on ways, means, and moods of the rural Ozarks.

When and if they are read, I usually draw a dribbling of letters which run like this:

"Why, brother, do you set out to confine your say-sos to the Ozark country? I live in Indiana, and the lot and habits of the marginal landholder here are the same as those there." Or it's "I live in New Jersey, so come down sometimes and learn about what is really rural." Or, "Read your ad while deer-hunting 100 mi. from Times Square & why be so tame?" As the dribble and years continue, and as I roam far and wide through far-flung wonderlands of farming America, as I watch farm consumption standards wane along with foreclosure rates, I begin to concede that my occasional readers may be in the right.

Therefore, if on some bright morning yet to come, I may draw a post card saying—

"Dear Mr. Morrow—Red yer skit about peasants & thot of my boyhood on Long I. NY & oblige"—

Then, should you fancy a thoraxial rustle, that will be me—purring.

But who are American peasants, and what are their ways?

II

ESSENCE OF RURAL HUMOR

SPEAKING GENERALLY, the peasant American is a kindly soul and a neighborly one, a keen observer and a good listener. He laughs at ambling drolleries, at stray turns of irony, at verbal horseplay. He possesses a jocundity so vital, tethered so securely to earth, that it endures even as the generations fade. Therefore his humor is not likely to be new or sparkingly original.

It suffices grandfather and father as well as son that Uncle Ameriky Hansen got religion at the Schooner Bald revival meeting only to lose it again when his buggy bounced down a couple of ledge boulders and broke a left fore wheel; that Aunt Marthy Pippitt set twenty-six hens and hatched three pullets and three hundred and ninety-six roosters; or that Parson Milsap absent-mindedly ate a mink in place of a gray squirrel.

The scene is Kennicott's store at Blue Eye, a situation but slightly commercial. The group includes Dave Beatty, Forgy Dell, Marcus Feitz, Henstep Creaseley, Tola Summerlin, Homer Bullteeter, Homer's hired boy Bill Skeats,

and the storekeeper. These occupy poultry crates and such. They whittle matches into infinitesimal slivers. They draw strange diagrams on the dusty porch floor and whistle tunes that take after nothing in particular. They indulge in slight sounds, slow gyrations, slight parleyings, patterings of feet, uproarious yawnings, and stretchings in the form of capital Xs and Ys.

Their relish for the wisecrack inevitably forthcoming is enhanced a dozenfold by such interludes of speculative waiting. The first spiel is by Bill Skeats, since hired boys are among the most cherished perpetrators of store-porch mirth.

Bill Skeats, then, sitting in sunny oblivion on the lowest estate of the store-porch steps, opens in dialect at his boss:

"Homer, how's hit do for me to ride your hoss home?"

The employer quivers slightly.

"It wouldn't do so good, I've got to ride him myse'f." Then with a soft ripple of merriment: "Mought be you could walk alongside me though."

"No, I reckon I'd better jest be pattin' down the road now by myself. If I was to walk aside you, I'd have to open and shet ever' gate and fence-gap between here and thar."

There is freely given laughter. The afternoon flow of jocundity has started. Homer faces unsteadily towards his lolling hired help.

"By the way, how come you ain't workin' today?"

The youth deliberately readjusts his battered felt hat and leers.

"W'y, I was workin' but I got hurt. You see I was plowin' corn in that fur squirrel patch and drekly I come to the field—I fell off—and wrenched my knee."

Backbrush humor hangs upon pegs that are unashamedly obvious: the old gentleman who can't get any satisfaction out of reading the dictionary because it changes the subject too often; the itinerant parson who agrees that a spring wagon and a span of mules are fool proof, but not necessarily damn-fool proof; the upbrush politician who craves a postmastership within easy walking distance of a distillery; the clodhopper who overwhelms the school-teacher's suggestion that the burning of Mart Miller's barn must have been the work of an incendiary with, "Incendiary, hell! Somebody sot it."

The humor carries an amiable plenitude, too, of anecdotes of stupidity.

The sheriff of a brush county in Southwestern Missouri was forming a posse to recapture a depraved culprit who had broken jail while the defender of justice was away investigating. A store-porch commentator reported that the fugitive had spent half the afternoon strolling about the village; that he had last been seen taking out westward down the old wire road. Then the observing countryman added that he had seen the sheriff pass by the

escaped prisoner not an hour before. The upholder of sovereign justice admitted it.

"Oh, yes, yes! I seed him all right—passed him on the town branch bridge a while after dinner time—passed him and spoke howdy to him. But I didn't know the low hound reprobate was out of jail."

The store-porcher relishes so simple an episode as that of the rural lad and his first banana. The youth from Alpena was taking his first train ride, and when the newsman came through acclaiming "chawkleets—bernanners!" the mountain lad invested readily in the latter. On the next round the caller stopped to ask after the qualities of his wares.

"Well, Mister, I can't say so bodaciously much for it. In the first place it was mainly all cob; and when I'd throwed that away, what little they was left was bitter and sort of 'ornery to eat."

Sometimes the gentleman of the store-porch is tickled almost beyond endurance by ignorance of rural ways, by unfamiliarity with the dictates of soil and season which he himself knows so well. The newcomer who figures to get rich off a few slanting acres of stump ground; who would bear down on his plow handles, tie up fodder with string, buckle the throat-latch of a bridle before he set the bit, undertake to keep the birds from his cherries or the squirrels from his corn—such a yahoo provides material

for slow perceptive smiles based upon first-hand understanding of the ways and wiles of wooded hill and brushy dale.

The conversation on the store-porch drifted around to the chinch bugs, which had descended upon the tasseling corn in leeching multitudes. The drummer from Saint Looie wanted to know what a chinch bug looked like.

"You say it's no bigger than a seed tick?"

Nods and salivary assent.

"Why, I wouldn't have my crops wiped out by a little thing like that."

The sitters nudged one another and one soberly asked what the commercial ambassador might figure to do about it.

"Do about it? Why, I'd get me a good two-handed brush and frail 'em off my place."

The store-porch humorist is not, of course, above a pun. An old codger from Red Star was telling of his family.

"Yes, suh, they come three boys, then a girl, then another boy. So I named 'em Matthew, Mark, Luke, Ann, John."

And he knows the value of hyperbole. One time I asked an old countryman why he preferred cushaws (large hooked squashes) to pumpkins. He spat.

"Well suh, if I was to grow punkins on them slopin'

fields, they'd likely break loose from the vines and roll down and kill somebody. But cushaws—they hook themselves to corn stalks and ketch on.”

Nor is the store humorist immune to the potency of slap-stick. There is no good reason why he should be. Mimicry can also put him into the high rhapsodies of mirth. And the countryside idiot is a dependable source of laughter.

The rural commoner likewise is amused at the plight of the singing master who started to cross Brush Creek by means of a log bridge, and went to where the log bridge wasn't. There moonlight and a black shadow had fallen across the way, so the singing master, mistaking the shadow for the bridge, decided that he would just hunker down and 'coon across it. So he knelt, putting his elbows forward and painstakingly plunged head first into a stream of ice-cold water.

Backwoods fondness for burlesque mingles mirthfully with the liking for the humor of ignorance. For that very reason countrymen enjoy country jokes and relish the opportunity for embellishment and parody.

“You know, over at Post Oak Hill, where we come from, that there's the reel brush. Pap Eason he's about the only feller down that there creek bend as knows how to read and write. So about seven or eight of us chipped in and taken the Springfield newspaper, figgerin' as how Pap could read it to us.

"Well, we done hit, and one day we was settin' around listenin' and Pap was readin' about where the paper said as how ever'body ought to plant a lot of corn and plow hit a lot because some mighty bad droughts was comin'. Mart Miller set and puzzled awhile and then he says:

"'Pap, what's a drought?'

"Pap chawed his terbaccar a minute and stroked his chin-whiskers and then says,

"'Well, I couldn't be jest shore, but if I ain't mighty mistaken, a drought is one of them new-fangled var-mints that's a cross betwixt a coon and a wildcat. Anyhow they shore is hell on corn.'"

Another tale of the same timbre tells of a rural countryside in the throes of a summertime political campaign. Squire Techstone was running for circuit clerk against a slicked-up county seat lawyer. The two were orating at an August picnic. The legal member was offering belligerent argument.

"That man is as ignorant of the law as he is of the responsibilities of office. I would even defy my opponent to define so simple a legal term as *habeas corpus*."

Squire Techstone lifted off his battered felt hat and cogitated.

"Well, unless I'm mighty fur wrong that term means a red Jersey heifer fresh with a first calf."

There are rural epics of the sort that came about when

Newt Finnen's wife prevailed upon Newt to take all their children to the protracted meeting.

"Newt said he couldn't rightfully bear to set and listen to preachin's, but one time his wife got come over with holiness and she hawg-an'-pantered him till he had to take her an' the young 'uns to meetin'. Newt set out on the back porch till the preachin' was all over, then he commenced gettin' oneasy about was the young 'uns still there. He figgered he'd better round 'em up. So he strolled inside and brushed back the black bristles from his forehead and says,

"'Emmy, Dan'l, Sady, Jude, Prosey, Tom, Virgil, Dessie, Newtie, Violeeny, you-all here?'

"They says, 'Yes, Pa, we're here.'

"So then Newt lined 'em up and struck out for home."

There are times when the edge of satire may become a bit cutting. A countryside revival meeting had reached the stage of spiritual orgies. The parson preached, the congregation rolled and grovelled and kicked up straw. Then came the hour for testifying.

Brother Amos, the countryside cripple, squatted upon a convenient corner bench. He was a paralytic, an invalid hopelessly cramped and drawn, with gangling and unruly limbs. During the course of the testifying the parson called upon the crippled one to rise and tell what the Lord had done for him.

Brother Amos roused jerkily, raised his chin a bare inch from his chest in painful deliberation and struggled to manipulate his lagging limbs. There was a silence of expectation and awaited revelation. Then the lame one shrilled:

"You was askin' what the Lord done for me. Well, I'll tell you. He jest blamed near ruint me."

The run of store-porch humor is withal a gentle humor, a garnishment for extensive leisure, cornmeal mush, sun and rain, dew and moonlight, and backwoods stillness. It rarely carries bitterness. It may be brusque but it is seldom vengeful. It is rarely ulterior. A man does not use it to sell his hen's eggs, or to acquire a soft job, or to swarm with the village social bees. The peasant laughs because he sees no reason why he shouldn't.

As an example of the kindliness of the humor, there is a recitation dealing with a lad from Gulch Hollow, who on first coming to Eureka, was lured by the tempting yellowness of the store-window lemons. The youth had never seen lemons before and he figured to sample them. So he bought a dime's worth and proceeded to try out the purchase. A first attempt to bite through the tough rind revealed an appalling mistake. But in the sight of a half-dozen onlookers the lad from Gulch Hollow did not once hesitate. He ate the first lemon whole; then the second and third. Nobody laughed. There was not even

the suggestion of a smile. The rural youth addressed a sober audience.

"Yessir, fer a considerable spell I've been honin' to get my fill of these here tropical fruits because I shorely do pleasure in the flavor of 'em and now I aim to revel in it."

Then with puckering lips he retreated toward the village pump, his departure unmarred by laughter, his sensitive spirit unchafed.

And one time the folks were having a moonlight supper up at the Brush Ford schoolhouse. Uncle Zeb Hatfield, who hadn't been out to any manner of funmaking in a month of moons, was a bit unsteady about his etiquette, and in consequence chanced to pour buttermilk into his coffee instead of cream. An observing farm wife moved to fetch him another cup. But Uncle Zeb would be the subject of no such bother. He blew at the murky fluid and assured the company that taking buttermilk in coffee was to him an invariable habit. Steady faces accepted that declaration. There was not even an adolescent snigger.

Backwoods humor has its subtle side, too. The commoner from Low Gap is capable of a cerebral chuckle now and then, fully as capable of it as his brethren of the town.

He enjoys his Aunt Lulu Pettigrew's complaint of pains in her abominable muscles, or that most of her family have

died of nobility, or that with one of them New Fords her son Wid can climb any manner of mountain in neutral. He relishes such picturesque generalities as those of Judge Patton of Kentucky, who once offered these instructions to his jury:

“Gentlemen, whenever you see a big overgrown buck a-settin’ at the mouth of some holler or the fork of some road, with a big slouch hat on, a blue collar, a celluloid rose in his coat lapel and a banjo strung acrost his chist, fine that man, gentlemen. Fine him! Because if he ain’t done somethin’ already, he blame soon will.”

He enjoys hearing the Tannehill child assure a younger brother that if he will only stop hollerin’ he can watch the old gentleman fall off the hay wagon.

He enjoys the strategy of the thrifty old lady of didactic leanings who in remonstrating with some little boys for their stealing a pocketful of pears, assured them that if they would only be forward and honest about it and bring along something in which to carry the fruit home, she would be glad to give them the pears. Five minutes later she was faced by the pack of youngsters who brought an old-style clothes basket capable of holding at least four bushels.

There is an ephemeral freshness to backwoods humor due in part to its nearness to earth; in part to the ways of its perpetrators—their slowness of speech and droll maneuverings of expression; their posture and inflections

which cannot be adequately reproduced even in the most accommodating of type.

The great majority of upcountry jests are neither scrupulously original nor sparkingly clever. Often enough a rustic gem will shine for generations. And this fact is easier to understand when one understands that in Elizabethan America one generation is very much like another.

III

IN SERIOUS MOOD

REFLECTIVE THINKING is scarce in America as it is in most other portions of the workaday and modernized world. But while other schools of contemporary thought are relatively well told of, backwoods thought has had astonishingly little interpretation.

We hear much of the doings of "professional minds," much of business thought, editorial thought, the legal, the medical, or the collegiate mind, all much jumbled and confused, a fact which harks back to the obvious proposition that the highly schooled mind is the more difficult mind. The bulk of its original certainties is quickly dissipated. The highly learned man or woman is continually finding himself without intellectual anchoring.

Confronted by the magnetic goal of success, and the struggle to maintain a standard of living to fit his position, the average city-dwelling money-grubber is kept humping, and his shoulders are bowed beneath his burden of ambition and progress.

But the common man of common land suffers no such fierce goading. He has the leisure of the rural day. He

has time to ponder. He can "set" on the sunny side of his porch and whittle. If his material resources are scant, he nevertheless has reasonable freedom from the panic and confusion of getting ahead. He has indeed the rarest of all modern luxuries, idle time, without chronic unemployment.

Thus it comes that backwoods America continues as a haven of refuge for the waning art of conversation. The mood of an upbrush countryside is propitious for the exchange of idle talk. While the urbanist darts restlessly through life, hurrying on the retinues of human ills, shortening his natural span of years, the peasant may pause by the wayside for parlance.

The range of his speculation is not therefore specialized or arbitrarily confined. He talks and ponders at random on hog killing, war, divine conception, dog training, post splitting, hay curing, government, chinch bugs, of God and water lizards; his moods ranging from the ludicrous to the gracefully pathetic.

The backcountry commoner who is capable of the most lolling listlessness is also capable of the most intense ecstasy. The same ruralist who would sleep soundly through the whole of an extension lecturer's dissertation on coöperative alfalfa and better bulls, very probably registers the highest rhapsody of delight at the coming of a drought-breaking rain. The very uplander who regards the shenanigans and ignominies of government with

withering contempt, will likely at the outbreak of war, become the most enthusiastic of patriots.

Yet delight in verbal intercourse in no way marks the good peasant as a habitual chatterer. On the contrary, his humors are, as a rule, more taciturn than garrulous. His high moments are likely crowned with silence. He endures grief, consummates love, and engenders great hate with a minimum of verbal display. As a general proposition he finds vastly more delight in first-hand experience than in verbal dissertation on that experience.

But his speculative curiosity is a distinctive philosophic attribute.

A sentient philosopher, the rural commoner, guides his meditation largely by sense reaction. He predicts and amplifies from the casual behavior of natural objects. Thus it is that a red sky at sunset comes to tell of bright weather for the morrow; that the lay of the Milky Way foretells the prevailing direction of the wind for the period of a lunar month; or that thunder in February means frost in May.

Withal, the peasant mind is possessed of a certain maturity of viewpoint, a result, perhaps, of his seasoning in actuality, of knowing life with a tremendous intimacy. A disciple of the fierce experiences of Dame Nature, he witnesses with first-hand intimacy the processes and urges of procreation, the courses of growth, seeding, harvest, and death. The primitive turns of the life about him fall

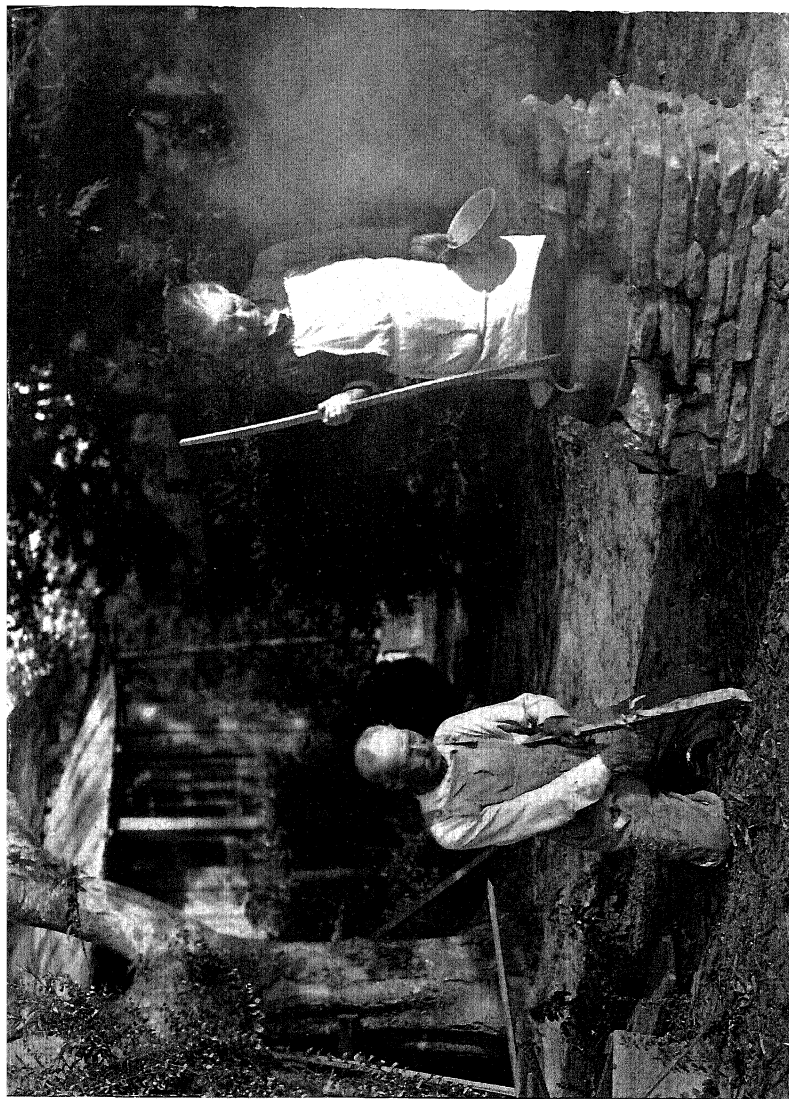
within the scope of his intimate and feeling knowledge.

Thus the actual range of his knowing is surprisingly high in comparison with the great majority of professionals or urbanists. The backwoods ruralist must meet life in many capacities and grades.

In winter time he is likely to be a woodcutter, a waggoner, a hunter or trapper, a home craftsman—a cobbler, a basket-maker, a cabinet worker, a wheelwright, or a fence builder. With the coming of springtime he must turn plowman and planter. As his crops grow, he must make sundry changes in tools and application of skill. The manipulation of a light cultivator is vastly different from the handling of a heavy plow. Building a wheat cock involves a complicated although totally different technique from that of shocking corn. Hay hauling is of itself a skilled trade, as is corn husking. Then when the harvest is made, he must turn salesman and bargainer.

So his years go, with their rounding series of requisite skills. The chances are that he must also know something of the ways of court or the law, of taxation, of the ways of road and school building. His wife must needs be cook, nursemaid, herb mistress, fruit canner, governess, dressmaker, washwoman, milkmaid, and very frequently a field worker.

The other day I made a twenty-mile jaunt through the backhills of Northwest Arkansas, following an old road which led through tangled areas of hillside farms. In



HE PLANTS HIS CROPS WITH THE UNDERLYING IDEA OF SELF-SUSTENANCE; CORN FOR MAKING MEAL AND FOR FATTENING LIVESTOCK. HE PLANS FOR CURED PORK, HOME-RENDERED LARD, AND HOMEMADE SOAP. HE LIKEWISE MAKES HIS OWN CONTRACTIONS



IN THE WAYS OF HIS FOREFATHERS

the course of the wandering I saw seventy-six field laborers, of whom seventy-one were girls or women.

Backwoods thought holds but a working minimum of the artificial. The peasant has little hand in the spoils of unearned increment, commercial conquest, or business strategy. His viewpoint cannot be shaped by the enticements of duration or the permanence of accomplishment. For him life comes and goes as do the seasons. His interlude of production begins and ends with the months of growing. He plows his land, lays it off into planting rows, plants seed, and cultivates and harvests his crop. The cleanest of furrows will normally not outlast a change of the moon. Arrow-straight corn rows can endure but a single season. A field kept immaculately clean of weeds and sprouts will next season conceive new weeds and new sprouts in a hoe-defying multitude. When a drought comes, young crops wither and parch. There can be no denying or altering the case.

As a first child of the great mother, the countryman has absorbed plenty of her giving of doubt and contradictions. But the element of hazard must hold its inevitable place in his conduct of life and his thinking ways. Thus thought processes of the backwoods American are characterized by a quality of intellectual poise, a slow dignity of expression, and a deliberate weighing of values.

The state of backwoods credulity is vastly overestimated.

Merry quips at the expense of the gullible yahoo are usually very badly grounded as to facts. Backwoods credences are more than mere byproducts of punch clocks and balance sheets and the innumerable gadgets of a plethoric city culture.

The backwoods American senses and endures. He reckons that if the ways of nature are at times ruthless, they are nevertheless inevitable. Life is his elemental interest. So it comes that his workaday philosophy shapes itself into a sort of hazy pantheism, a leisurely adoration of life as such, a creed which requires no particular correlation of being and becoming, nor categorical definition of mind and body.

Unlike the futurity seekers who are ever prone to reach for the sun only to find themselves claspng dimes, the peasant man rests closely upon the nurturing soil, which takes his sweat and labor, gives him victuals and support, and by way of a final swap takes his body to augment its fertility.

IV

PEASANT MORALITY

THE MORALITY of the remote farm community is an old one. It has survived long with little change. Essentially a static ethics, the prospects are that it will continue as such.

Highways and tourists' posts and rustic resorts come and go and come again, bringing with them the aroma and grosser mechanics of commercial America. But their area of penetration is clearly limited. The land waits.

Accordingly, peasant morality carries a minimum of outside stimulus. It is an ethics of approximate stability. Want of handy communication and conventional prosperity cuts off innumerable urges from without. If the upbrush commoner hears nothing about the need of relief for the missionary-stricken Chinese, the grain famine in the Ukraine, or the indoor scandals of British nobility, such alliances can play no part in shaping his behavior or his propelling view.

But one particular flotsam of mortal folly stands as an exception. National Prohibition has unquestionably wielded a brutal and demoralizing influence upon rural be-

havior generally and has tended decidedly to increase the prevalence of vengeance and suspicion and so to augment the homicide rate. Moonshining, traditionally a back-country vocation, increased by leaps and bounds with the enactment of the Eighteenth Amendment. New blood came into the industry, and a heavy majority of the upbrush countrysides were influenced actively by the illicit manufacture of liquor.

Then the noble defenders of our nation's Constitution came down into the hills for dirty business, and they performed it, making and breaking confidences, bringing about arrests and distresses, and some of the bloodthirstiest and most infamous man-killings in a not-too-unsullied history.

But the era of legal debauchery is slowly fading with the demise of the Eighteenth Amendment. The moonshiners have, on the whole, emerged victorious and liquor-making is taking its just place among the most substantial of agricultural vocations.

Statute law rarely suffers systematic enforcement in the back-country. Law as an institution is interesting enough, but not particularly apropos or expedient. For the countryman is still environmentally an individualist. Accordingly, he may not understand why the course of his behavior should be shaped by the Baptist and Methodist gentry who propel the state legislature. The contention that law offers protection of life and property does not

go over so effectually with a citizenry accustomed to self-protection and self-support.

Some characteristics of peasant behavior are self-obvious. There is the initial proposition that backwoods morality places a low valuation upon human life. This may be a survival from Elizabethan tradition. Or more probably, it may come of prolonged and first-hand association with the practices of Dame Nature.

At any rate, rural homicides tend to outweigh town homicides. Taking the seven westernmost counties of North Carolina as a typical backwoods area, we find there that the annual toll of homicides varies from one annually out of every thousand citizens to one out of every seventeen hundred. The story is typical of backwoods areas in any one of a score of states. Their population is long-settled Caucasian American. They are free of blood feuds, blackmailings, paid gunmen, or racketeers. Still the homicide rate for the United States as a whole is one to sixteen thousand; of Great Britain one to one-hundred and ten thousand; of Germany (before Hitler) one to two hundred thousand.

Land ownership, crop division, tenantry, square dance etiquette, horse trades, unfortunate reference to canine influences in parenthood, and clear corn liquor are the most common sources of motivation. Backwoods violence is essentially a violence of primitive fury, a violence of hot words. The majority of the killers are neither de-

generates nor monomaniacs, but long settled, level-headed commoners who are ordinarily peace-abiding, temperate, and moderately abstemious. Somebody does something or says something, and then the trouble promptly begins.

The world-famous Hatfield-McCoy feud started when a McCoy penned up two razorback pigs which were claimed by a Hatfield. A bloody West Virginia feud broke out with renewed vigor when a twelve-year-old offspring of one of the warring families accidentally discharged a rifle, the muzzle of which was pointed groundward. In the hills of Northern Arkansas a mild-mannered patriarch once started a feud by shooting down a grandnephew who had playfully slipped a handful of sand into the old gentleman's sugar bowl.

But the days of feuds are fast waning. Homicidal violence becomes essentially a matter of the individual, and many an upbrush killing is but a quick flame sprung up from among the embers of old hates.

A handy illustration happened not long ago at Kingston, a hamlet in the wilds of Madison County, Arkansas. It seems that better than thirty years ago a couple of rural swains had the misfortune of courting the same damsel simultaneously. A fight ensued, in the course of which one of the rivals received injuries which left him a life-long paralytic. Neither of the suitors actually married the girl under contention, and both lived on in the

same countryside as tolerable, if not particularly amiable, neighbors.

Then one day the crippled one, albeit he had endured in silence more than thirty dragging years of his infirmities, all at a turn just up and decided that the hour was come for a straightening. He loaded his eight-gauge shotgun with buckshot and floundered up to his regular loafing place on the front porch of the village store. And when his rival of the late nineties came by, he gave him both barrels in the solar plexus.

The belated aggressor was never convicted.

Sometimes the most violent of primitive furies, when apprehended before they have progressed to the murder stage, may be appeased with the most trivial of pacifism.

The two Mullins boys ran a drugstore over at Fly Gap. Both were the prospering kind, creek-bottom misers strayed off to town in the interest of commerce.

Faced with the necessity of batching, the Mullins brothers acquired a country damsel as housekeeper. Matters went their way, and before the year was out, the housekeeping damsel returned home pregnant and unwed.

The wronged father oiled up the family firearms and set forth in quest of the miscreants.

But word of his coming preceded him to Fly Gap. A countryside vagrant happened to see the killer-to-be and so did some timely Paul Revering. The Mullins boys

thanked the informant kindly and struck out for shelter. The wronged father strolled into the drugstore and demanded that the proprietors come forth and take their medicine. Nobody came. The old gentleman tested the trigger action of his blunderbuss and started to look further. There could be no denying that he meant to kill.

So the forerunner of disaster sought to mediate.

"Now listen here, Mart—them boys didn't reelly mean no harm. Mought be we could fix up a settlement. . . ."

"You mean to say mebbe they'd pay somethin'?"

"Why, yes, I expect mebbe they mought. Course I don't jest know how much . . ."

"My God, if they don't pay me twenty-five dollars I'll shoot hell out'n the two of 'em!"

"You jest wait here while I chase over and find out."

The mediator located the Mullins boys behind a high protectorate of baled hay and put before them the proposition of raising twenty-five dollars. Lige accepted the proposition eagerly but Clarence thumbed his vest pockets and speculated.

"Twenty-five dollars is a mighty lot of money."

Then he glanced out toward a far green pasture and saw there a very ancient and decrepit skewbald pony.

"No-o-o, I'll tell you. We'll jest give him that old pony in place of twenty-five dollars."

The peacemaker returned to put the bargain. The in-

jured father accepted, shouldered his blunderbuss, and led home the pony. Within a week he had sold back the animal to the Mullins boys for ten dollars cash.

In matters of property, the peasant American is likely to be painstakingly honest. It is altogether probable that an upbrush commoner who wouldn't take a pin from your dresser or a hickory nut from your woodlot, even if you were a total abstainer and a Republican, might at a reflection cast upon the insufficiency of his vitals or at a suggestion of canine ancestry, straightway stroll over and pick up a wagon-spoke and brain you on the spot.

Sneak thieves are rare and burglaries virtually unknown in the average backwoods community. Houses stand open the year round. Long-lived citizens live out their generous spans without once investing in a lock or key, and a locksmith in the average upbrush countryside would be about as prosperous as a bookstore on Park Avenue.

This ethical superiority of property over life has called for various hazards at explanation. It may be a survival of the primitive frontier wherein life was easily begot and replenished, albeit property was extremely scarce. Or it may be a mimicking of Dame Nature, who is prone to conceive life possessed of an inherent appetite for the destruction of other life. But this leads us straight into the world of philosophy.

V

RELIGIOUS GATHERINGS

BECAUSE OF THE disordered and helter-skelter holdings of the existing country churches, their uncoördinated management, and their sectarian pugnacities, dependable statistics or specific estimates as to the number of holdings and the extent of the permeation of these churches are extremely hard to find.

I recall one attempt at enumeration, a church membership census undertaken in three typical backhill counties in Southern Missouri. There no more than ten per cent of the upbrush citizenry are "converts" in the sense of having undergone formal initiation into a given sectarian faith.

At another time, several years ago, an eastern magazine writer came into the hills of Arkansas, found his devious way back into the wilds of Newton and Franklin counties and spent all of a week at recording the true how of backbrush ways. This statement appeared in the course of his printed report:

"I stand here upon a high mountain top. Looking

about me I can see for twenty miles in all directions, and in the whole of that imposing panorama of remote hill country, there is not one church building.”

The report appeared in a widely circulated farm magazine. A number of rural economists at the University of Arkansas straightway protested. The statement, they contended, was misleading and slanderous. For, praise be, there were churches in that region; at any rate church gatherings even if there were no church buildings. Services were being held in district school houses, or in private homes.

Both sides were superficially right. In extensive portions of the backwoods, purses are not sufficiently plump to build and maintain even the most modest of church buildings, with the result that countryside gatherings for worship must be held elsewhere. But I am afraid the gentlemen of the faculty were straining several points when they defined these Sunday night gatherings as church services.

For they are not church services—certainly in no literal interpretation of the term. They are simply intermittent comings together of good countrymen who are vastly more interested in plain-spoken conversation than in the uproarious triteness of the conventional sermon, choir singing, fashion competition, political coterie, economic snobberies, and various other unfortunate garnishments of the city God-house

In various instances, town churches have attempted to dictate and to supervise religious activities of outlying mountain districts, usually with no very convincing results. For the proposition stands self-evident that the conventional town-worshiper and the isolated country man have very little in common.

From a country paper I clip this "rural estimate" of Sunday mission activities of a county seat church.

<i>Place</i>	<i>Attendance</i>	<i>Collection</i>
Black Oak	15	30 cents
Center Point	13	63 cents
Highland	14	76 cents
Sycamore	18	54 cents
Sulphur	20	11 cents
Durham	20	53 cents
Dripping Springs	25	30 cents
Little Elms	10	13 cents

Slim enough picking. The peasants are poor, and they are not convinced of the elemental importance of cash offerings.

But the true backwoods Sunday gathering holds its place as an institution of distinct picturesqueness and originality. And community singings are another backwoods substitute for the dusty formality of conventional worship. The men and women of the upbrush relish singing, and as a rule they make no sorry job of it. There

are few trained voices, but the will to sing is almost invariably there.

Accordingly singers congregate to sing, their ages ranging from eight to eighty—little girls of shyness and blue hair-ribbons; hill girls with spontaneous beauty and wicked eyes; young farm wives with features that tell of eagerness to feel and to understand; gangling and love-stricken adolescents; old wives, toil-worn and fearless; elderly codgers with carbuncles and property; young husbands who sing a vacillating baritone as they juggle infants.

So the singing parts congregate to the front, while the remainder of the comers constitute a silent audience. The song leader takes his post, a countryman with a steady voice and impelling mien. He chooses the hymns or songs; he suggests the tempo, whether it should be perked up or slowed down; he wields a leader stick, a ferule or a plain round or a buggy spoke, sings over a preparatory do-re-me, and strikes into the opening of the song. Then the evening begins, and the singing carries on while the moon sets and the night grows late.

Sometimes these Sunday night singings take the form of countryside contests wherein one district strives to "sing down" the neighboring one, with non-singers serving as judges. So the contests hold, all through the fore-half of a winter's night, until the young choristers begin to show signs of passing into the land of blink and nod.

Then there are the Sunday night "talk meetin's," simple communions of country people, who would talk of rural generalities, of crop ways, exchange views upon problems philosophic or casually abstract. Is the world getting better? Is the pen mightier than the sword? Can war be abolished? What are we comin' to, nohow?

There is no very convincing evidence that the backwoods offers an anywise promising field for missionary labors of "settlement" projects. The few attempts which have proved successful are but accentuated by the multitude of failures.

If the uplander has neither extra dollars nor the prospect of acquiring extra dollars, he obviously cannot jar down with a generous Sunday offering. And professional preachers must be paid. One can hardly expect a progressive plank-banging Methodist parson to stick indefinitely at Pettigrew, Arkansas, with a salary of twenty-one dollars a month and an annual allotment of four pigs, winter firewood, and a wagon-load of corn. For the progressive divine, there are likely to be valley towns with sewerage system and police patrol, and adjacent small cities with their blocksful of souls in need of salvation, not to mention talking pictures, Rotary Clubs, and vaudeville.

In matters of prescribed faith, peasant America is likely to stay amicably aloof. But the fact remains that the backcountry does have its eras of intense holiness. Recur-

ring revels of worship break out. In their most primitive appearances these protractions take the form of "brush arbor meetin's," the name derivable from the fact that shelters are built of oak poles and roofed with leafy branches for marking the place of worship.

These backbrush holyings are periodic emotional overflows—interludes of spiritual and sensual revelry which are, in a very literal sense, a renewal of olden orgies of fruition, of adoration of wine and grain and fleshly loves.

Hill people come for brushy and roadless miles to add their presence to the gathering of strident but temporary ardor. Self-appointed ministers arise to exhort. Sane, peace-abiding citizens howl and roll and grovel—looping drunk on salvation. Stutterers and harelips arise to testify. Cripples acclaim themselves cured and throw away their canes and crutches, only to gather them up again next morning. There are "shouters" who become highly refractory. There are "trancers" who regularly pass into interludes of dead oblivion. Farm wives shriek and sob in virulent ecstasy. Respectable patriarchs whoop and bellow and kick up dust. Youths and maidens stagger away into the forest night, there to seek communion in pairs. Not infrequently, backcountry doctors reckon on having their heaviest run of illegitimate childbirths about nine months after the close of the holying, all of which goes in support of the cryptic proposition that at a brush arbor meeting more souls are made than saved.

Then, when the pious revelling is finished, when the emotional overflow has gained due vent, the participants return to their habitual even-keeled living ways. Then the most fervent of the shouters, the most uproarious of the confessors is likely to regain, as if by magic, all his whimsical dubiousness of assertion, his philosophy of workaday acceptance, his lyrical delight at the modest servings of every day. The spell is broken—until the coming of the next revival.

But as a day-in and day-out phenomenon, the great citizenry of the backwoods is prone to keep allegiance with very old deities of effect—soil, weather, and growth. Joshua may or may not have made the sun stand still. Jonah may or may not have been swallowed by the whale. But the far ruralist knows with powerful certainty that it falls wholly to the benevolence of this super-trinity of soil, weather, and growth to direct whether his corn crop turns out fifty bushels to the acre, or only a hat-full of unshuckable nubbins; whether his fruit trees and berry plants shall bear; whether or not his calves and pigs shall wax fat on open pasture; and ultimately whether or not he and his woman and his young 'uns shall eat well and enjoy new shoes and overalls and gingham-wear, or skimp through the winter on corn pone and branch water.

VI

FOLK BELIEFS

FOR STUDENTS OF folk belief, the Ozark hills of North Arkansas and Southern Missouri provide a splendid sequestered laboratory. For that matter, so does virtually any other remote countryside of considerable area and duration of settlement.

Folk beliefs of one sort or another are everywhere; they are omnipresent like air and sunshine. But some species of folk beliefs, like some of the stranger and more exotic wild flowers, live only in dense shade and isolation. No folklore can be immutably fixed as to either location or material. New superstition is continually sprouting, some of it instigated by peasant mystics, some by countryside idiots, some by the inevitable current of coincidence.

But, generally speaking, peasant folklore appears to be a notation of sense reaction enlarged by the myth-making talent for relating specific events that are to follow one another with mysterious continuity.

I have gathered the following material from isolated communities in the Arkansas hill counties of Newton,

Franklin, Madison, Benton, Carroll, Jackson, and Washington, and in Stone and Taney counties of Missouri.

To grow good pepper, get mad while you are planting it.

Plants of darkness, root crops and tubers, should be planted in the dark of the moon; above-ground crops, in the light of the moon.

Fruit can never be killed in the light of the moon.

Wool washed and warped while the moon is waxing will stretch; wool washed and warped while the moon is waning will shrink.

Trees should be deadened and fence rows cleared in the dark of an August moon.

Pork meat should be slaughtered in the light of the moon.

Transplanted trees should be set out in their original position, north side north, etc.

To make dogs fierce, feed them gunpowder.

Catch a butterfly, bite its head off, and you will get a dress or a shirt, the same color as the butterfly.

Eggs set on Sunday will hatch all roosters; eggs carried in a woman's bonnet will result in pullets.

A snake can't die until the sun goes down.

To provide for the desired coloring of a colt, hang a cloth of that color in front of the mare's trough. When the colt is born it will be the same color as the cloth.

To locate straying live stock, scare up a daddy longlegs and follow his direction of lead.

If sassafras wood crackles and splinters while burning, some one about the hearth will die before the winter is out.

If a rooster crows or a fox barks near a sick room, or if the patient plucks at the tip of his covers, death is close about.

If one sees his reflection in a house where death is, he will die within a year. Accordingly, during funeral proceedings shades may be drawn close, and mirrors and glassware are covered with white cloths.

When you see the first star in the evening, spit over your left shoulder and make a wish, and your wish will come true.

When you see a redbird, make a wish. If the bird flies upward the wish will come true; if downward, it won't.

Ghosts can be killed with silver bullets.

Salt and pepper should be the first articles taken to a new house.

To drop a dish rag foretells a dirty caller. If it drops in a wad, the comer will be a man; if spread out, a woman.

Dropping cutlery predicts the coming of hungry visitors. A fork means a man, a knife a woman, a spoon a child.

To dream of a birth means a death; to dream of a death foretells a birth.

A dream told before breakfast, or one dreamed on Friday or told on Saturday will likely come true.

A pregnant woman should be fed everything she has an appetite for. Should she feel that she would relish some particular food and fail to get it, the young one will be afflicted with an ungovernable craving for that victual.

If the sun sets behind a bank of clouds on Thursday, it will rain before Sunday.

Lightning in the south foretells dry weather.

A red sunset means clearing weather; a yellow sunset, rain.

Snake tracks foretell rain.

The coming of a turkey buzzard is a sure sign of spring.

Thunder in February means frost in May.

If a chicken's tail feathers spread in the wind, that is a sign of rain.

If it rains before seven it will clear before eleven.

A white circle about the moon tells of rain or snow, and the number of stars within that circle tells the number of days until the falling weather begins.

It is bad luck to shake hands across a gate, to get out of bed left foot first, to sweep a floor after sunset, to dream of muddy water, or to open an umbrella in the house, or to walk across the room with only one shoe on. Likewise it is bad luck to begin a piece of work on Fri-

day, to come back for something after one has started, to carry a hoe through the house, or to move cats or brooms from one house to another. And it is just as unlucky to stand under a walnut tree during a thunder storm, or to close a gate which one finds left open, or to tolerate crowing hens and whistling women. It is bad luck for a woman to sing before breakfast. If she does she will cry before night. One who sews after sundown or mends a garment while wearing it will be poor always. It is unlucky to spill salt, to carry ashes out of the house on New Year's Day, to whirl a chair on a single leg, or to look at the moon through bushes. If a person has money in his pocket when he first sees a new moon, he should turn the money over, because if he does that, he will have money all the rest of the year. And there is a maxim of housewifery which stipulates that if a woman shakes her dress at the new moon she will be sure to get a new one.

Folk remedies make up a substantial part of backwoods lore. Where hospitals and licensed practitioners and navigable roads and spendable money are scarce, ailments are also many; and so are herb doctors and home doctors and midwives and blowers and healers and sundry others of their kind, who, although not legal practitioners, do nevertheless practice. Backwoods medicine lore ranges from the most distorted voodooism to highly logical pharmacy.

Gold beads worn about the throat are a remedy for sore throat, red beads are a cure for nosebleed, a black silk cord about the neck aids croup, and a leather necklace is a first-class guard against whooping cough. Mare's milk is good for whooping cough. Wearing a buzzard feather in one's hatband will ward off the rheumatism. A hog's tooth carried in the right pants pocket will keep away toothache. To cure foot cramps, turn your shoes bottom side up before going to bed. To cure fits, tear the victim's shirt off and burn it. Bad dreams are but visitations of the nightmare man. To keep him away, one should wad the keyhole with cotton and sleep with a sharp knife under his pillow. To cure toothache, tie a charmed number of knots in a fishing line and wait. If an eye is plagued with a sty, run it over with the tip of a black cat's tail.

Water dipped out of an open stream before sunrise on Ash Wednesday is a first-rate cure for rheumatism. Rain-water caught on the first of June will serve as a cure for freckles. So will water in which a blacksmith has cooled his irons. For chapped lips, kiss the middle rail of a five rail fence. The seventh son of a seventh son will have extraordinary powers of healing, and so will a posthumous child of either sex. A buckeye faithfully worn will serve as a charm against any disease, and flat leather bands or woolen strings worn about the neck are reckoned to ward off any manner of childhood disease. A fragment of

sheep entrail sewed up in the seam of a garment serves the same purpose. Amber beads will reduce a goitre, and a cartridge belt worn low on the waist provides a splendid cure for rheumatism. Freshly chewed tobacco is reckoned to draw out the poison of bee stings.

The run of backhill herb doctors are high advocates of teas—catnip tea for colic, horehound tea for coughs and colds, sassafras tea as a spring tonic, mullein leaf tea for asthma, and slippery elm bark tea for all sorts of intestinal disorders. Wild cherry cordials and the inner bark of post oaks are common laxative sources. Medicine is most efficacious when given at the time of a waning moon, because then the ailment will also wane. For skin diseases and rashes the irritated portions should be washed with dew, or with a blend of honey and buttermilk. The sap of wild grape vines provides the most common hair tonic, and any true backwoods Ozarkian will testify that hair should be cut at new moon time, for then it grows back luxuriantly.

Old wives of the upbrush can recite maxims of love and marriage by the leisurely hour.

May marriages are unlucky, and so are those consummated in rainy or snowy weather. Burnt cornbread portends that a girl's sweetheart is angry with her; a cobweb over the door means that he will never call again. If the kitchen fire burns brightly, that signifies that a suitor can be depended upon, but when it burns slowly the indica-

tions are that he will bear watching. Cold hands indicate a warm heart and are, therefore, indicative of love.

If a redbird flies across a girl's path, it means that she will be kissed before night, or if a girl stubs her toe and straightway kisses her thumb, a sweetheart will appear almost immediately. A woman may win a man's heart by secretly laying hands to the back of his head, or by putting a drop of her menstrual fluid into his liquor. When a damsel's skirt flies up or her stockings fall down, the indications are clear that her lover is thinking about her.

Love potions stay in more or less common use in the Ozark country—perfumed mixtures of milk, sugar, and flour, or some such powders packeted so that they may be conveniently dropped into the coffee or more stimulating refreshments of a cooler sort. And there are love charms made of cherry pits or pink soapstone and worn most secretively about the neck.

A first-rate love test is to bend down a mullein stalk and point it towards the loved one's cabin. In case she loves the bender, the stalk will grow up again. If she loves somebody else, the mullein dies. And there are sundry adages of selection, such as

Beware of that man,
Be he friend or brother,
Whose hair is one color
And his mustache another.

There is the augury of the daisy petals—"He loves me, he loves me not." Or to increase the alternatives, there is another

He loves me,
He don't,
He'll have me,
He won't.
He would if he could,
But he can't.

There is another test of love estimated from the behavior of apple seed. Take two apple seeds and name them for the couple in question. Then put the seeds on the point of an ash shovel and hold them over the fire. If the heated seeds jump apart, then all is not well with the amour. If the boy seed moves away and the girl seed is left forlorn, then again all is not well.

Helpful miscellanies are sundry. The breast bone of a turkey hung over the front door is said to have an amorous influence upon all entering eligibles. When a briar attaches itself to the hem of a damsel's apron, she should name it. If it sticks, her lover is dependable; if it drops, the indications favor a stitch in time. If a girl wets her apron at washing she will have a drunken husband. If she cuts her finger nails on nine Sundays in 'succession, her sweetheart will dine with her. If she sits on a table she cannot be married for another year. If she watches

a caller out of sight, he will never come back again. If she will look intently at a bright star, she will dream of her sweetheart. Three oil lamps in a row foretell a wedding in the family.

There are folk anecdotes galore, some of them age-worn humors, others sequestered versions of universal folk tales. In an isolated village in the Arkansas hills, I have heard the story of Jack and the Beanstalk told in such a way as this:

"Once there was a little boy that lived with his cranky old grandma. One mornin' the old grandma was a-sweepin' out the house and she swept up a funny lookin' bean, and she give it to Jack and says, 'Jack, take this here bean and plant it.'

"Well, he done it. And next mornin' he got up early and went outside, and lo and behold the bean had done sprouted and a stalk growed up higher'n the house. Next mornin' he looked again and seen that the bean stalk had growed plum up through the sky. Well, so Jack figgered he'd climb it and hack down a mess of beans. So he clumb and clumb and picked beans and throwed 'em down and then clumb some more and finally he come to a great big field sort of place. So he walked up through the field and d'reckly he come to a big palace house and there was a old wife a-settin' there and she says:

“‘My goodness, little boy, my old man is a man-eatin’ giant and after while he’ll be comin’ in and you’ll get et.’

“But she taken Jack inside and hid ’im under a bed. So d’reckly the old giant come prowlin’ up a-hollerin’, ‘Fe fiddle de fo-fum, I smell the blood of a Englishman!’ But the old woman she said they warn’t nobody about and so the giant he set down and et supper and while he was eatin’ Jack was layin’ there lookin’ at his boots and guns and walkin’ sticks and a-wishin’ they was all his’n.

“After a while the old giant laid down and when Jack heard him snorin’ he slipped out and took the gun and slipped off down the bean stalk. And next day he come up again and the old woman she says, ‘Little boy, you’d shore better be keerful because my man done missed his musket and if he ketches you he’ll shore eat you up.’

“But Jack went on in under the bed and the old giant come in an’ et and laid down and commenced snorin’ and that time Jack took down his boot. But before he went he seen some of the most beautiful chiny bells tied onto the bed cords.

“So next day Jack come back again. And the old woman says, ‘Oh, my giant man’s awful mad at you this time and you’d shore better run home before he gets here and catches you.’ But Jack says, ‘Aw, I ain’t afeard.’ And he went on in and snuck in under the bed. After a while the giant come in and et supper and laid down.

“But Jack he was in such a sweat to get hold of them

bells he didn't wait fer the giant to commence snorin'. He just grabbed 'em and lit a shuck fer home.

"Well, the bells commenced jinglin' and the giant jumped out of bed and tuk in after Jack, a-hollerin' 'Fe fiddle-de fo fum—I smell the blood of an Englishman and dead or alive I'll have his bones to eat with my bread and butter!'

"So Jack tore out and when he'd got to the bean stalk he hefted the bells over his shoulder and commenced climbin' down. The giant started climbin' down after him. But Jack got to the ground fust and he yelled to his grandma to fetch him the choppin' axe quick. She brung it and Jack chopped the bean stalk and the big old giant come tumblin' down and busted himself."

Tales of witchcraft are as common as oak leaves. Here is a fair specimen, a story of a witch and a cat's paw.

"Once there was a farmer who was married to a witch. One night his wife went out, and he didn't know for sure but he sort of suspected that she had gone to a meeting of the witches.

"And directly a black cat came in the room where he was waiting and laid a paw on his knee. And the farmer was so downright upset that he grabbed out his knife and cut the cat's right fore paw off. Then the lamp glittered out and there was a rush of wind and a lot of screaming and scampering and when the farmer looked again he saw

a woman's hand laying on his knee where the cat's paw had been.

"Next morning his wife complained of a misery and she couldn't budge out of her bed. And when the farmer laid back the cover to look at her, lo and behold! her right hand was cut off."

There are fantasies of a happier sort.

"One time a hill man went hunting. He tramped and tramped a long ways and after a while night began coming and he was getting bodaciously tired. So he hung his powder horn on a bright yellow hook and then he lay down and slept. But when he woke up next morning the powder horn was gone and so was the hook.

"So the man went home and came back the next night. Well, directly the new moon came up and there was his powder horn hanging in the horn of it. So the fellow lifted the powder horn off, and it was as good as ever."

Another one tells of a bent gun. It seems that a countryman had been a deer hunting, but he never could get he prize because, when he spotted it, the deer would lways make for a round mountain and run round and ound it, and the hunter never could get close enough to hoot.

But finally he blundered onto the idea of bending the arrel of his gun to fit the bend of the mountain. So he potted the deer again, and when it got to the mountain

he aimed and banged away and stepped back into the bushes.

After a while the deer came tearing by and the hunter could hear the bullet just whistling in after the critter. Well, after the deer had tore around the mountain a couple more times the bullet caught up with it and killed it.

VII

BACKWOODS LANGUAGE

PEASANT LANGUAGE HAS pristine word qualities and a natural instinct for sound and oral values. It has freedom to vary and invert, a feeling of freshness and of stylistic distinction. It is a forceful speech; it can clothe the most extraordinary incident with matter-of-fact colors of reality. It can give to casual bits of everyday the most delicate shadings of romance.

The life of a back countryman is likely to be one of vague wondering and leisurely understanding, and speech is but a turn in his path of living.

Beefsteak when I'm hungry,
Corn likker when I'm dry,
Pretty little gal when I'm lonesome
Sweet heaven when I die,
Sweet heaven when I die.

This high spot from a droning ditty called "Sourwood Mountain" seems to me a first rough outline of backwoods living, a creed of storm and sunshine, growth and rest, the progress of the seasons, changing of the skies, the

coming of nights and consequent dawns, the old established phenomena of sun, rain, and earth.

In sundry respects country speech is surprisingly effective; its characterization is quick and vivid; its narrative is admirable for its homeliness; and its sayings usually go to their mark with epigrammatic force. A patriarch of a sun-filtered hollow was accounting for his married life—and the lastingness of his home:

“Well, an infare wedding was the reel beginning. Sally’s folks gin us a big supper after the weddin’. Ever’body on the creek was thar, that is, the young folks, you understand. They’d cooked up ’most ever’thing—deer meat, fried ham, sausage, turkey and chickens and all sorts of gyarden stuff and pies and cakes.

“And when they’d et, they commenced to frolic. We sat by the fire whilst they run a set or two, then Sally leaned over to me and says, ‘Abe, why can’t we run a set, too?’

“I says, ‘We can, by ginger!’ So we run a set. Then all the fellers wanted to swing Sally, so we danced a Virginy reel. Well, we slept thar that night and next day we went over to my folks and they gin us another supper and frolic. And the next day atter that we come up here where I’d raised this house.”

The old gentleman’s cabin is one of the old backwoods sort; two logbuilt rooms and a boarded-up lean-to.

The roof-line is a trifle catawampus; the rough stone chimney tilts a bit unsteady-like and the walls are weather-warped and powdery gray. Wild ferns grow at its shaded end, grass and buck bushes and tea roses vie for space in the rough-faced lawn. A pathway leads into an uncertain lane of snowballs and flowering quince and coral berries. The ancient cedar behind tells of slow centuries of shade. Scattered sunlight falls upon the low porch-front and enriches its garnishment of red burney pepper and drying ears of seed corn.

"It ain't much to look at, but it's been home for a mighty long time. They's not much in it but I reckon they's enough. Like I was sayin' to her, 'Younder's a right smart chance of corn and a heap of fruit stuff and the shoats will be big enough to kill for meat after the mast is gone.'"

His philosophy of immaculate assurance is readily comparable to the provincial confidence of Piers, the Plowman:

I have no pennies pullets for to buy,
Neither geese nor pigs; but two green cheeses,
A few curds and cream, and a haver cake,
And two loaves of beans and bran for my infants
And yet to say, by my Soul, I have no salt bacon
Nor no cockney, by Christ, collops for to make
But I have parsley and leeks and many kole plants
And eke a cow and a calf and a cart mare

To draw afield my dung the while the drought lasteth
And by this livelihood we must live till Lammas time—
And by that I hope to have harvest in my croft,
And then may I dight thy dinner as me well liketh.

If backwoods language is basically a speech of illiteracy, it is not necessarily one of simplicity or of prevailing monosyllables. Indeed mountain speech carries a surprising portion of unexpectedly long or literary words—cavalier words such as grabble, denote, dilatory, cavil, caterwaul, discern, cuckold, mooncalf, and marvel.

Hit, the Anglo-Saxon of *it*, is used with a strange inconsistency. In fact, *hit* and *it* may follow one another in the same sentence or even in the same clause, as the delicacies of a primitive euphony may require.

Such forms as *afore*, and *ax* for *ask*, go back to the time of Layamon; *dauncy*, unsteady about one's victuals, dates back over five hundred years to the days of the Towneley plays. Such usages as *usen* for *used*, *perk up*, *aver*, *atwixt*, *I dare ye*, and *afeard* appear to pre-date *The Canterbury Tales*. *Fray* still carries its original meaning of a deadly combat; and there are even more picturesque survivals, such as *feathered into 'em*, a phrase which touches back into the romantic days of long bows and feathered arrows.

Missus, a married woman, survives the yeoman's *mistress*; a *sorry fellow* continues in common usage for *good-*

for-nothing but the term has no etymological connection with *sorrow*. A handmill is still a *quern* in some parts of the southern highlands, as it was even in Mercian days. A *turn* of meal is what one gets after a considerable spell of waiting his turn about a country mill, and the *toddick*, a grinding toll, survives the *toll dish* of feudal days.

Although the speech is intrinsically and stubbornly English, it sometimes carries a quaint smattering of romance terms. In the Great Smokies of North Carolina, for example, one may hear *doney* or *doney girl*, a current colloquialism for *sweetheart*. The origin appears to have been maritime. English sailors may have learned about *doñas* in Spanish ports. At any rate the term, reduced to *doney*, had become common nomenclature in His Majesty's Navy, and in the retentive hills of Carolina the usage has lived on.

So common a backwoodsism as *tetchous* directs one back to Richard the Third and his mother's testimony that "*tetchy* and wayward was thy infancy." Gower tells of "*a sighte of flowers*," a *handkercher*, and a "*soon start*." *A Midsummer Night's Dream* abounds with the "*pert* and nimble spirit of mirth." Like Piers, an upcountry Arkansawyer may carry a *budget* on his back and *tarries* now and then to *spend* an opinion, as Othello did. Or he may own a *scope* of land and *prank* with the young'uns while the crops *go to naught*.

The southern backwoodsman employs the Old English *stark* in such phrases as *stark* wild, *stark* foolery; and the Middle English suffix, *lik(e)*: *suchlike*, *familylike*, *pertlike*. He uses the Shakespearean *afeard* and *writ*. He would likely *straddle* a horse rather than *mount* a horse.

Usages of our contemporary ancestors of the southern mountains have illustrious precedents. Milton told of "Meadows trim with daisies *pied*." Hamlet assumed an "*antic* disposition," as might the Low Gap village cut-up. Chaucer and Spenser used *sleight* meaning *skill*; Piers talks of a *heap* of people; Hakluyt uses *allow* for *assume*; Spenser used *mought* for *might*, and he rhymed *yet* with *wit*. The Elizabethans called a *salad* a *sallet* and a *bag* a *poke* as do many of our southern highlanders. *Sech*, *sence*, *agin*, *Scriptur*, *ventur*, *nater*, *yit*, and *yander* all held the vantage of good usage in Spenser's day. Lovelace, the immaculate one, used *holp* for *helped*, *drug* for *dragged*, *fotch* for *fetch*, and *wrop* for *wrapped*. Sidney said *fur* and *furder*.

There is a sad story about a Kentucky mountaineer who blundered upon one of John Fox's stories about Kentucky mountaineers and was duly perplexed at the dialect. And finally he gave the ultimatum: "Why, that feller don't know how to spell."

Personally I believe that Fox's reproduction of the southern mountaineer's language is far more accurate than that of a majority of the writers who have striven

with the so-called dialect. But any representation must necessarily be difficult and it can scarcely be uniformly accurate, if only because of the variations and contrasts in citizenry and locale. And language is a plastic stuff which must shape itself to the requirements and whims of changing ages and sundry places.

The countryman of the backbrush is governed in word choice by a keen estimate of place and company and propriety. The same speaker, on different occasions, may say *hit* and *it*, *saw*, *seen*, or *seed*, *fotch* or *bring*; *ain't*, *hain't*, or *isn't*; *set* or *sot*. He may *lug*, *tote*, *shoulder*, *heft*, or *carry* a parcel; he may *fling a rock* or *throw a stone*.

The peasant American is seldom at a loss for a word. When he comes to a verbal tight, there will likely come forth in the emergency, a coinage of his own; a new word form combination, a noun changed to a verb, or a verb made out of an adjective or an adverb. Adjectives arise from verbs—a *setalong* child; the *workin'est*, *travellin'est*, or *preachin'est* man. Or verbs may serve as adjectives or adverbs—"If I'd a been *thoughted* enough I'd a brung along them onion sets," or an adverb as an adjective—"I hope the folks over your way is all *gayly*." There are verbs improvised from adjectives, and nouns built from verbs—"he fell down and *nastied* himself," "don't *contrary* her," "it don't make no *differ*," "one more *gettin'* of fodder." There are frequent substantives like old *braggy* and little *hatefuls*. Many of the verbs are but

nouns of action—"Henry can't *faculty* the workin' of them town telephones," "Washington Dodd can *muscle* his little brother," "Colonel Bullteeters couldn't *confidence* no Republican," "Dickey Dye can't *sweetheart* nobody who ain't a proper Primitive Baptist."

Strong preterites survive in Parnassian vigor: *drunk*, *begun*, *rung*, *shrunk*, *stunk*, and *fotch*. There are innumerable preterites with dialect changes: *drapped*, *war* for *was* or *were*, *bruk* for *broke*, *saunt* for *sent*, *rok* or *ruck* for *raked*, *het* for *heated*, *ort* for *ought*, *shuck* for *shook*, and *whupped* for *whipped*. And there are old forms like *holped*, *mought*, and *cotched*.

There are idioms, too, quaint and variable: *for why*, *ain't much come*, *think me of it*, *light a rag*, *come in and set*, *spraddle out*, etc., words to fit a diction quick and vivid. There are folkish devices for intensity—*don't never*, *shan't ever*; negatives doubled and tripled—"Ben Hembres *never done nothin' nohow*." And there are conversational incidentals such as: *I tell you*, *I'm put here to tell you*, *thinks I*, *I says to him*, and *he says to me*.

And there are double-barreled pronouns, common but not invariable, picturesque but vastly overplayed by a majority of the reproducers of the mountain language: *we-all*, *you-all*, and *they-all*, and the Tennessean usage, *we'uns* and *yo'uns*. Personally I am convinced that the essential aim of the usage is to bestow an emphatically inclusive plural. This rule applies also to *you-all*.

AN UPCOUNTRY AR-
KANSAWYER MAY
CARRY A "BUDGET"
ON HIS BACK AND
"TARRY," NOW AND
THEN TO "SPEND,"
AN OPINION



A "TURN" OF MEAL
IS WHAT ONE GETS
AFTER A CONSIDER-
ABLE SPELL OF
WAITING HIS TURN
ABOUT A COUNTRY
MILL



This speech is often outstandingly accurate from the standpoint of pronunciation. The southern mountaineer can consistently be depended upon to say *dew* and not *doo*, *new* instead of *noo*, and *creek* with its correct vowel quality. A glimpse into the Oxford Dictionary will show, too, that his *et* is an accepted pronunciation for *ate*. The backwoodsman's *afear'd* is fully as good English as *afraid* is—etymologically speaking. *Narry* is *ne'er a* correctly spoken. The omission of the *r* as a lingual trait seems to be more than sectional. On the other hand all the breath saved by omitting *r*'s will be squandered on a surprising sprinkling of grace syllables and letters, such as *gyarden*, *warsh*, and *musicianer*. Then there may be unlooked-for internal vowel alterations, like *hed* for *had*, *raffle* for *rifle*, *chist*, *sarve*, *upsot*, and *turrible*; or consonant changes as in *seben* for *seven*, *nabel* for *navel*, *ballet* for *ballad*, *brickle* for *brittle*, *atter* for *after*, and *tejus* for *tedious*.

And there are the analogous compounds (existent to be sure, but usually overplayed by fiction writers): *biscuit-bread*, *ham-meat*, *rock-clift*, *cow-brute*, *man-person*, *women-folks*, *preacher-man*, *neighbor-people*, or *rifle-gun*. These may be employed primarily to clinch a particular reference which might otherwise be ambiguous. Rifle-gun, for example, isolates the rifle from shotguns, muskets, and other prevalent firearms.

As a general rule, peasant America speaks with a delightful flavor of speculative accuracy.

"No, my mule Tim plowed the field. I plowed Tim. But I'm tellin' you, mister, that was ex-ceptional cawn. Why, down in Goose Bill Holler that cawn gets so on-handly big and shady that you can see the lightnin' bugs in amongst it in the daytime."

The language is an old one applied with the picnicking spirit of youth, a tool of the mood and the moment. The commoner of the backwoods may substitute *damified* for *damaged*, or *unthoughtedly* for *unthinkingly*. He may testify that b'ar is *destructious*; he may *memorize* for *remember*, *disfurnish* for *inconvenience*. It is likely, too, that he will say *slaunchwise* for *slanting*, and that he will term nervousness the *all-over fidges*. He may say *pecker-wood* for *woodpecker*. A cow is likely to be, but not invariably, a *cow-brute*; while a mule or a horse is a *crit-ter*. He may affirm *candid* and *back-actually* that Tola Summerlin's was the best hawg meat he ever *et*, or that the line of his barn-roof is *hipskeltered*, *antegogglin'*, *catawampus*, or *wauperjawed*; he may explain to the outlander that he will have to get *naturalized* to the climate of the hill country.

Backwoods place names are another of the most fascinating resources of the language. They are especially full of color and they are original—not mere imitations or reproductions of old-country town names. I recall a score of them at a casual sitting: Loafer's Glory, Stand Around, None Such, Whuppin' Marthy, Far Ply, Alabam,

Monkey Run, Red Star, Aunty's Apron, Ginger Blue, Hell for Sartain, Bald Knob, War Eagle, Stink Creek, Dove Nest, Shiloah, Fightin' River, Big Sandy, Gizzard District School House, Nubbins, and Hard Times. All these are artful, refreshing, and contemporary.

VIII

FUN-MAKING

THE OTHER NIGHT we were strolling in the vicinity of a country schoolhouse. We paused at the hillside clearing to listen and in due course made out an enthusiastic thudding of feet—solid shoe leather descending upon solid boards. Coming closer we heard the squeaking of fiddles and sensed the pell-mell rhythm of frolicking bodies.

It was a Saturday night fun-making. The caller called out,

“Get your partners—balance all!”

Then the fun began. The voice of the caller sang out above the music of fiddles gone delirious with the melodious tribulations,

“Circle eight, circle eight, circulate!”

The upbrush swains danced in circles, swung their ladies by the right hand, then by the left, and whirled them about with the two-hand swing.

“First gents break and make a figger eight—sashay-y up the hall!”

Lanterns swung from the rafters. Fiddles slipped from the bondage of strict melody, and the world lay

still but for their song. Outside the hills waited, backed with gray acres of sky, eternally free of all anxiety and impatience.

The old style fun-making still survives in many sections of the backcountry, which is fortunate, for the institution is American and democratic in the finest and broadest sense of the word. So the rural revellers come, children of open trails and dust and forest twilight; swains in new blue overalls with amply turned-up leg-cuffs, girls in colorful gingham and black stockings and store shoes, which are sometimes carried to within convenient range of the gathering place in order that the new polish may be saved the blemishes of dust and dew; old folks in meeting clothes; young ones in rhapsodic eagerness; and wistfully pursuing dogs.

Sometimes the frolics are held at the district school house; more often at a home place or in a vacant cabin. Ordinarily the back rooms are provided for the succor of the very old and the very young; the fore-room is cleared of all rugs and incidental furnishings and the walls are circled with lines of chairs and benches.

Fun-makings begin usually after sundown, as soon as the chores are done; and as a prevalent proposition they last until past midnight, occasionally until dawn. Often enough the merrymakers get home just in time to look after the morning chores. Sometimes, too, the frolics come in interrelated series, with the result that many a

rural beau or damsel goes for a week with hardly more than a snatch of sleep. And that requires strong bodies and wills, for the going is fast and the intermissions are few, and able-bodied wall flowers are simply non-existent. But the physical limitations of mankind are ever apparent. Sometimes the staunchest of revellers must take leave before breaking-up time in behalf of the bed-time sentiments of his grandma, or because of Aunt Violeena's rheumatism.

Late May is the heyday for upbrush cavortings. By then the corn is planted, the strawberries are picked, spring lambs have taken on considerable growth, and still the season is young.

The lull of late summer furnishes another expeditious interlude, for then the days are too sultry and sapping for industry or exorbitant ambition. Then there is mid-year holiday time, the festive fortnight between Christmas and Old Christmas, which is reckoned in the backcountry as January sixth. Winter brings to the hills even greater sleepiness and solitude. Farm work is slight. Hog-killing and corn-gathering are finished by the middle of December, and during the three or four months of winter spare time is superbly abundant. So the years have frolicking endings and beginnings, and the gay, picnicking spirit of the young frontier lives on among a citizenry who have not yet come to translate days altogether into dollars, or social evenings in terms of social and cultural ascension.

Music has always been one of the most delightful resources of backcountry fun-makings. The songs are rich in adaptability and in varied and folkish creativeness. They radiate the effervescing gayness of their peoples and, along with it, tell of the background and interest and everyday philosophy of a great and enduring race. Square-dance songs include such standbys as "Turkey in the Straw," "Captain Jinks," "John Brown's Body," "Wait for the Wagon," "Liza Jane," "Ain't Gonna Rain No More," "Shoo Fly," "Darling Nellie Gray," and tunes from without—drinking songs, sailor chanties, immigrant songs, nursery rhymes, and hymns—all readily shapeable to the levelling spirit of making merry. The ditties show astonishing contrasts. Pathos follows horseplay, irony mingles with wistful sentiment, satire treads upon the heels of compliment, and natural history frolics into fable.

Three or four song types are outstanding in their frequency. In the first place there are sentimental songs made to be funny:

I went to see Miss Susan,
She met me at the door,
She told me that I need not come
To see her any more.

She said as how she'd fell in love
With Rufus Andrew Jackson Payne;
I looked her in the face and said,

Backwoods America

"Then goodbye Susan Jane."

O Susan Jane, come stop that foolin',
Stop that foolin' now.

Susan she is so deceivin',
She will not do to trust;
I have threatened twice to leave her
And leave her now I must.
I'll never love another,
To cause me any pain.
I trusted her, and all the gals
Are just like Susan Jane.

Then there are ditties of satiric or facetious temper.
The domestic tribulations of Old Joe Clark stand as a
handy example:

Old Joe Clark's a preacher,
He preached all over the plains,
The highest text he ever took
Was high, low, Jack, and game.

Old Joe Clark he had a dawg
As blind as it could be,
But every time it treed a coon,
Joe swore that dawg could see.

I went down to old Joe Clark's,
Went right in the door;
He slept on the feather bed,
And I slept on the floor.

I went down to old Joe Clark's,
The house was all alone;
So I et up all the meat
And left Old Joe the bone.

Old Joe Clark he had a wife,
Her name was Liza Jane;
I took her up and kissed her twice
And set her down again.

She throwed her arms around my neck,
She kissed me twice and cried;
She said I was the sweetest thing
That ever lived or died.

I went up the new cut road,
And she came down the lane;
I throwed my hat in the fence corner
And scared out Liza Jane.

The ultimate outcome of the amour is left to the common creative imagination.

Another type of song is that of dance directions built into the form of easily improvised lyrics:

"All gents to center with a right-hand cross—
Ha dede diddle a dun.
Form a star with your left hand back,
Take your partner as you go around.

Backwoods America

"Gents swing out and ladies swing in,
Hold your holts and circle again,
Break that swing and promenade,
Promenade with a waltz-time swing."

Then there are songs of idle cogitation, doggerel ditties strung together for no particular reason other than helping along with a general good time:

Old Mister Rabbit,
You've got a funny habit
Of jumpin' in the garden
And eatin' up cabbage.

Old Mister Rabbit,
Your legs are so long,
It seems to me
They're put on wrong.

Old Mister Rabbit,
Your ears are so thin,
It seems to me
They're made out of tin.

These rural lyrics of open harmony, sturdy volume and energetic toe-work, with an occasional war whoop thrown in for color and emphasis, are close kindred to the square-dance ditties; in some instances identical are the game songs, more commonly known as play-party songs. And that brings us again to a point of definition.

A play-party is a square dance without fiddles, or other out-croppings of instrumental music. As an institution of fun-making it is even more folkishly original, for at a play-party the merry-makers must sing their own songs and manufacture their own mirth as they go along.

The play-party opens usually with a compromising and simple parlor game, such as spinning the pan, or explosive charades. Then when a festive spirit becomes engendered, a swinging game gets underway wherein all participants sing lustily and keep time to their singing, the while going through with various dance figures, marching, skipping, swinging partners, bowing, dancing in circles of four or eight, promenading singly or by couples, weaving back and forth in rollicking rows, sashaying and retreating as the game demands.

Like the square dance, the play-party is a distinctly American institution. Like the square dance it requires a caller, preferably with an assistant or two, and perchance a feminine ingénue. Directorial qualifications include abundant energy, a strong and carrying voice, copious stores of songs and wise-cracks, a knack for improvising filler verses, and a skill at introducing humor and variety at the expense of others present.

Here are a few typical play-party games. Some of the steps and turnings are intricate and alertly graceful and the complete participant must get into the spirit and rhythm of the game.

"Old Dan Tucker" is a tried and proved standby. The game goes like this:

The players take partners and form a circle, all holding hands. An odd boy is chosen to be Old Dan. The more bashful he is, the merrier. Old Dan stands alone in the center, while the circle moves about him singing:

Old Dan Tucker he got drunk,
Fell in the fire and kicked up a chunk;
Coal of fire it burned through his shoe,
And O by Golly how the ashes flew.

Old Dan Tucker's a good old man,
Washed his face in a frying pan,
Combed his head with a wagon wheel,
And died with a toothache in his heel.

Old Dan Tucker down in town,
Ridin' a goat and leadin' a hound,
The hound give a howl and the goat give a jump
And throwed Old Dan'l astraddle a stump.

Old Dan Tucker down in town,
Swingin' the ladies all around;
First to the right and then to the left,
Then to the one that you love best.

At the call of "first to the right," Old Dan grasps the hand of the first damsel handy, pulls her into the ring, swings her about once and returns her to her place.

At "then to the left," he takes another girl by the left hand and swings her as before. At "then to the one that you love best," every swain in the circle swings his partner, and Old Dan strives to grab a girl for himself. If he succeeds, the vacated partner must be the next Old Dan. If he fails, he must undergo the singing procedure another time. Naturally there are abundant singing stanzas, designed to keep Old Dan in the ring as long as possible.

There is another good play-party game called "The Juniper Tree." This is a ring game, too, but the central sitter is a girl. A circle is formed as before, and an old hat tossed up for snatch-grab. Whoever of the masculine portion gets hold of the hat is reckoned as being lucky, for reasons that will soon become apparent. The participants march around in the circle singing:

Rise up my dearest dear
Present me to your Paw,
And we'll go off together
To the state of Arkansas.

So keep your hat on,
Hit'll keep your head warm,
And take a sweet kiss;
Hit'll do you good, I'm shore, I'm shore.
Hit'll do you much good I am shore.

At the lyric command of "Keep your hat on," the lucky man puts the hat upon the head of the central female and

claims his kiss. The girl names her successor, and so a good time is had by all.

There is another very old game called "The Needle's Eye." A boy and a girl stand facing one another with arms raised and hands locked to form an arch. The players romp beneath the arch single file.

The needle's eye that doth supply
The thread that runs so true;
O, many a lass have I let pass
Because I wanted you.

I don't want him, I don't want her,
The thread that tells so true,
O, many a lass have I let pass
Because I wanted you.

At the stipulation "Because I wanted you," the arch couple drop their arch at a quick and common impulse and so capture the player who chances to be going under. When a girl is caught she takes her place behind the catching girl and the captured man falls in rear of the masculine captor. Then each member puts arms around the middle of the arch couple, and the players combine in a festive impulse to pull the arch apart. When they succeed, another arch couple is chosen and so the merri-ment is carried on.

There is another old standby called "Sugar and Tea." The players form in parallel lines, boys on one side and

girls on the other, each one standing conveniently opposite his partner. The first beau to the right leads his lady down the aisle and the singing commences:

Lead her up to sugar and tea,
Lead her up to candy;
You swing around that sugar and tea,
While I swing around that dandy.

Hi ho, that sugar and tea,
Hi ho, that candy;
You swing around that sugar and tea,
While I swing around that dandy.

The boy leads his damsel back to the starting point, swings her around glibly, and the assembled party sings again the chorus—the last stanzas. Then the boy takes the next girl in line, and the girl takes the next boy, and so on until everyone has participated in the swinging.

“Jingle at the Window” is another good play-party game. The players choose up partners and form a double ring, the girls in the inner circle, each one standing before her partner. The menfolk sashay about single file, while the women wait still, and all sing:

Jingle at the winder, to-de-O;
Jingle at the winder, to-de-O;
Jingle at the winder, jingle-jo;
Jingle at the winder.

When the swains have circumvented all the circle, each one returns to his partner, swings her once, and then they begin another sally, music the same, but words somewhat altered:

Pass one winder, to-de-O;

Pass one winder, to-de-O;

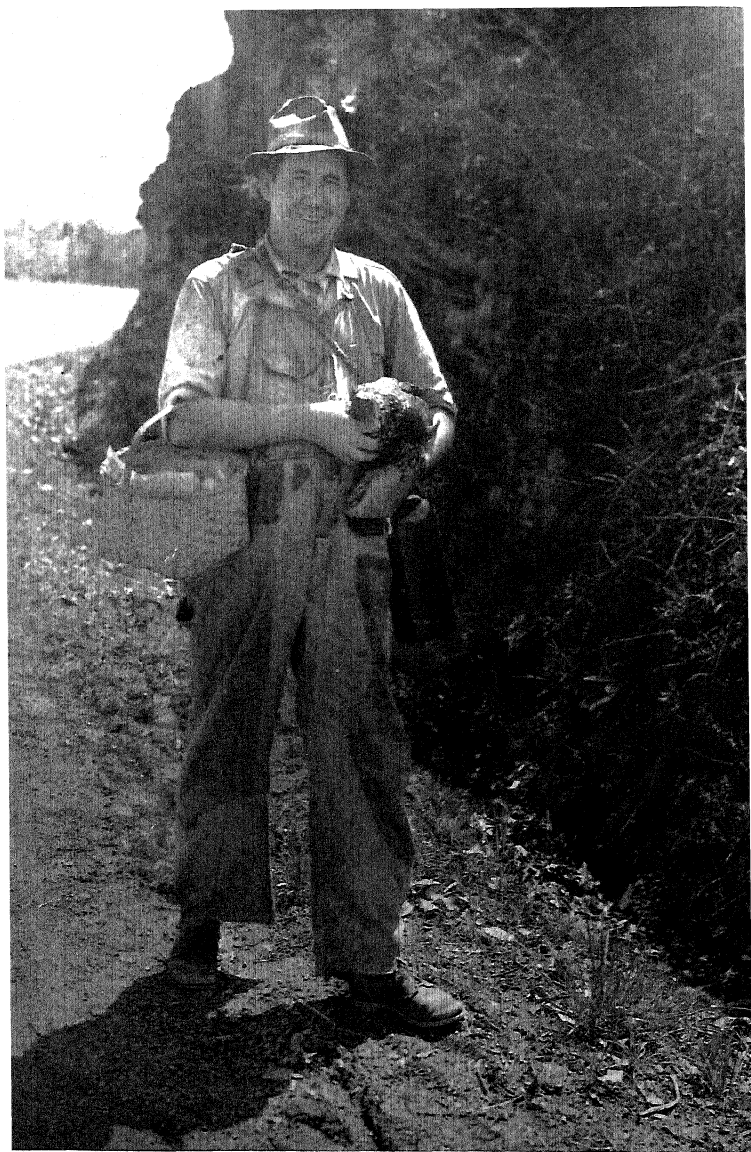
Pass one winder, to-de-O;

Jingle at the winder.

Then each fellow passes by his partner and swings the damsel next, and so on until all players are completely swung. There are further variations, "Pass two winders," "Pass three winders," etc. When the masculine portion becomes pretty well worn out, the women folks may take the outer circle and do the swinging.

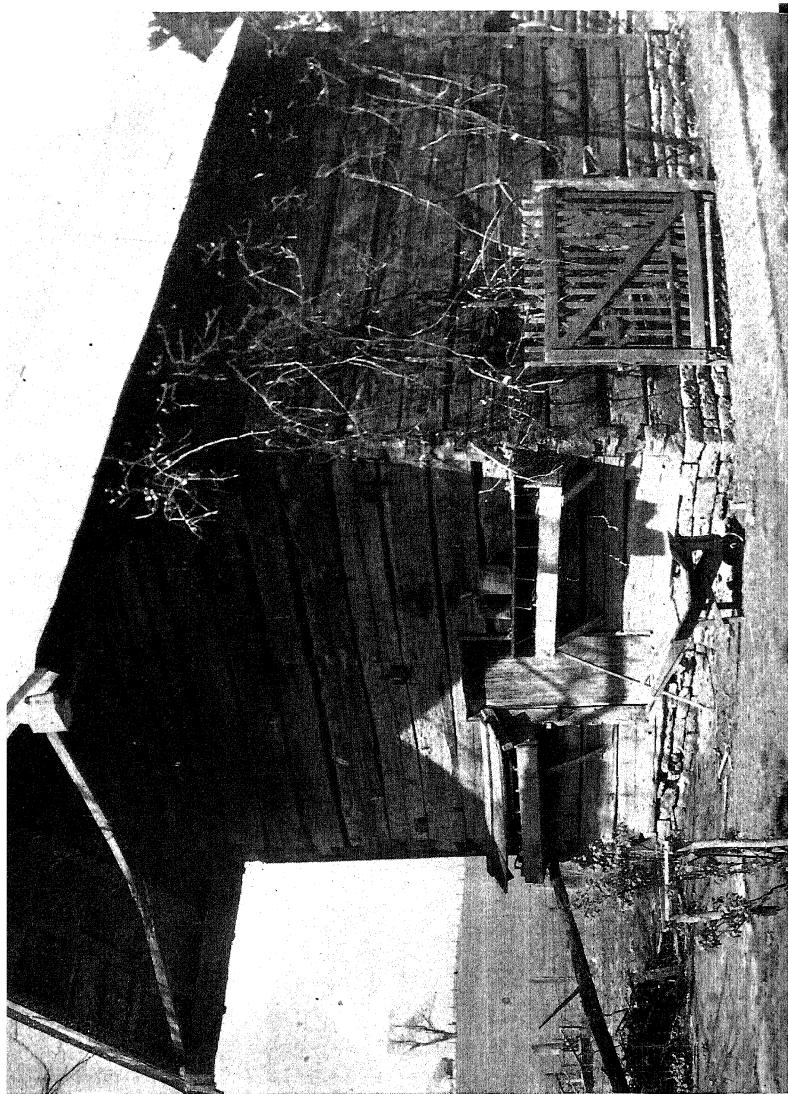
There are dozens of other play-party games. One could exhaust much space and scarcely begin to tell the half of them. All manner of jigs and dance capers are thrown in for liberal measure, and at higher interludes of song these may give way to the most unexpected and energetic of hoe-downs. Sometimes, when the parties are large, the playing goes in alternate shifts, the idle portion looking on, offering zestful wise-cracks and indulging in stop-clock repartee along with the probable refreshments.

There are incidental games reckoned to be played during the breathing spells. "Clap in, Clap out" is one of the most common, a sort of contest of inference designed



COUNTRY TRADE RESTS BASICALLY ON A SOUND COMMODITY DOLLAR—NOT A CREDIT
OR A SPECULATION DOLLAR. IT IS BASED UPON TANGIBLES.

THE BASIC HY-
POTHESES ARE
BOUNDED BY APPLES
AND FIREWOOD, A
SMOKEHOUSE FULL
OF PORK JOINTS,
A CRIB OF CORN,
AND A TREASURY OF
CHEWING TOBACCO
FOR THE WINTER



for the embarrassment of males and the enlightenment of females. The men folk retire to a back room while the women wait and speculate. Then they call out the name of a given swain, the more bashful the better. The boy is required to take a seat beside the girl who he believes has named him first. If he misses his guess, the feminine cue is to join in a common clapping and then the guesser must retire and guess again. Accordingly do youths blush and damsels snigger.

It would appear nowadays that country fun-makings are undergoing an era of increasing simplicity. Dudery is dying. Easy, everyday clothes are taking the place of the garish foppery of a generation ago. Loud ties and stiff collars grow fewer. No longer is the man who comes to the party with his trouser legs tucked down in the top of his boots, per se, a regular fellow. No longer does the rural youth cavort to the accompaniment of ivory cuff buttons clicking within celluloid cuffs. And the tormentive stiff collars, which in the old days allowed their wearers to look at the sun only at high noon, are gone the way of last winter's snows and of spring buggies.

A stiff-bristled forefather by the name of John Cotton, once was considerably wrought up about the way the young people were behaving. He complained belligerently of the "lascivious dancing to wanton ditties, and of wanton dalliances and amorous gestures."

His sentiments have since been reiterated. They were no doubt far from original with him. Still, the festive backwoodsman, not unlike his brethren of the metropolis or of the county seat, keeps along the jolly way, swinging partners, singing and frolicking and romping his course about the confines of many a festive room.

And contemporary fun-makings of town and country have numerous points in common. Jazz, like square dance and play-party songs, is an essence of the American play spirit. But the square dance and play-party are native with a more folkish intensity.

The new dance music and the old music of fun-making have in common another artistic quality, that of being trivial and thorough. Both represent an interminable series of burrowings into our current fields of imagination, aspiration, and fantasy. Both dispense the greatest of all the humanities, the casual and that which goes generally unobserved.

Comparatively speaking, the backwoods dance music is the scarcer and weaker in volume. It must be furnished usually by fiddles, sometimes augmented by harmonicas or banjos and mandolins. But compensating in picturesqueness are the frontier musicians, survivors of the frontier minstrel types who play with more vigor and endurance than technique, yet with spontaneity and freeness.

IX

MOUNTAIN BALLADS

A GREAT DEAL has been written about the native mountain ballad during recent years, and numerous compilations have appeared from the publishers. Regional variance and contradicting versions of the same ditty have no doubt brought many a graying hair to diligent editors and exacting proof-readers. All of which harks back to the obvious proposition that the native ballad is inherently opposed to the mandates of type and literal recording; that its seasonable vagaries and its endless remouldings to person and place and situation, are the very qualities which have made possible its survival.

First, from a standpoint of everyday recurrence, is the folk ditty, a lyrical conceit, frequently sentimental, sometimes amorous, not infrequently ludicrous or fantastic, occasionally philosophic. There is the lyrical journey of the frog with a matrimonial bent:

Froggie went a-courtin', he did ride, uh-huh,
Froggie went a-courtin', he did ride;
Sword and a pistol by his side, uh-huh.

He went into Miss Mouse's den, uh-huh,
He went into Miss Mouse's den;
And says, "Miss Mouse, are you within?" uh-huh.

He set Miss Mouse upon his knee, uh-huh,
He set Miss Mouse upon his knee;
And says, "Miss Mouse, will you marry me?" uh-huh.

She says, "Not without my Pa's consent," uh-huh,
Says, "Not without my Pa's consent,
Would I marry the Pres-i-dent." Uh-huh.

The romance continues with a delightful disregard for natural history:

But Mister Rat laughed till he shook his fat
sides, uh-huh.
Mister Rat laughed till he shook his fat sides,
To think of his daughter a-bein' a bride, uh-huh.
Where shall the wedding supper be? uh-huh.
Where shall the wedding supper be?
Way down yonder in a holler tree, uh-huh.
And what shall the wedding supper be? uh-huh.
What shall the wedding supper be?
Two green bugs and a black-eyed pea, uh-huh.
First come in Old Mister Bee, uh-huh.
First come in Old Mister Bee,
Bringin' a fiddle on his knee, uh-huh.

Next come Mister Snake, uh-huh.

Next come in old Mister Snake,
Passin' around a wedding cake, uh-huh.

Next come in old Mister Bug, uh-huh.

Next come in old Mister Bug.

A-passin' around the wedding jug, uh-huh.

This was the end of the wedding day, uh-huh.

This was the end of the wedding day,
And I ain't got no more to say, uh-huh.

There is a briefer recounting of the less happy adventure of a summer-loving grasshopper:

Grasshopper set on a sweet potato vine,

Sweet potato vine, sweet potato vine,

On a summer day.

Great big turkey gobbler come a-slippin' up behind,

Slippin' up behind, slippin' up behind,

On a summer day.

He snatched that grasshopper off the sweet potato vine,

Off the sweet potato vine, sweet potato vine,

On a summer day.

There are innumerable ditties of abstract but dramatic situations, such as the lyrical recitation of the leaving of little Willie.

Backwoods America

Willie, sweet Willie,
Willie, farewell;
I'm going to leave you
I love you so well.

My foot's in my stirrup,
My rein's in my hand;
I'm going to leave you
For some fur-off land.

Your parents don't like me;
They say I'm too poor,
They say I'm on-worthy
To enter your door.

Some say I drink whiskey,
But my money's my own;
And them that don't like it
Can leave me alone.

Willie, sweet Willie,
O Willie, farewell;
I'm going to leave you
I love you so well.

Another ditty of intense pathos chronicles the sad history of little Omy Wise:

I'll tell you the story of little Omy Wise,
How she got frowned on by John Lewis's lies.

He told her to meet him at Adam's spring,
Where he'd fetch her money and other fine things.

He brought her no money to set up the case;
But says, "We'll go and git married so it won't be no
disgrace."

She hopped up behind him and away they did go,
Down toward the river where the deep water flowed.

"John Lewis, John Lewis, do tell me your mind.
Do you figger to marry me or leave me behind?"

"Little Omy, Little Omy, I'll tell you my mind;
My mind is to marry you and leave you behind."

"John Lewis, John Lewis, I beg for my life,
I'll go around beggin' and won't be your wife."

Then he up and kissed her and turned her around,
And throwed her in the river where he knowed she'd
drowned.

The local ballad is another contiguous form, a roughly metered, detailed, and not infrequently an accurate recounting of a dramatic happening which has contributed materially to the building of local history. Here is a native ballading of what happened on May 4, 1905, in Breathitt County, Kentucky:

It was on the fourth of May,
Half-past eight that day.

J. B. Marcum was standin' in the court house of his town
Where Curt Jett was lurkin' 'round,
Just to get a chance to lay him on the floor.

Thomas White, a friend of Jett's—
No worser man was ever met—
Then come walkin' boldly through the courthouse hall,
As he was passin' by he looked Marcum in the eye,
Knowin' poor Marcum soon must die.

Judge Jim Hargis and his man,
Sheriff Edward Callihan,
Was acrost the street in Hargis Brother's store.
Some people knowed the plot and was listenin' for the shot,
And seen Jett's victim fall there on the floor.

Jett advances through the hall,
With his pistol, lead, and ball;
And he killed poor Marcum on the spot.
B. J. Ewen standin' by, saw him fall and heard him cry,
"O Lord, O Lord, they've kilt me down!"

Ewen kept his secret well,
Because he was afraid to tell;
He feared they'd kill him there and then.
They arrested White and Jett, and the court of Jackson met,
And the prosecution labored with its might.

With the courts of Breathitt over,
Judge Redwine could do no more,
And he left it with the jury for the right.
One man commenced to plead he thought they should be freed,
And it's believed Jim Hargis paid that man a fee.

Then the courts at Harrison met,
And condemned both White and Jett,
And sent them off to prison where they've both got to stay.
Their poor mothers grieve each day for their boys who've
gone away,
For there's nothing that can sever a mother's love.

She'll pray for them with every breath,
And cling to them until death,
And hope to meet them in the court above.
Marcum leaves a wife to mourn him all his life,
But his little children stand it well and brave.

But that little Curtis Jett,
Tom White, and others yet
Are the men who laid poor Marcum in his grave.
But they'll let these men go free and they pay their lawyer's
fee,
But they'll get their judgment on that judgment day.

The scope of mountain ballads is enormous. There are time songs and place songs and neighborhood songs, garnished with slight melodies uniformly repetitive. Old

traditions survive. Old ballads are transplanted in the retaining mountains of the New World, and in the passing acquire delightful tinges of native romanticism. As an illustration of the transplanted English ballad, here is the story of Johnny Scot as it now appears in the backwoods of Blount County, Tennessee:

King Edard wrote young Johnnie a letter
And sealed it with his hand;
He sent it to young Johnnie Scot,
As fast as a letter could go.

The very first line young Johnnie he read,
It caused him for to smile;
And the very next line that he read,
The tears run down awhile.

He says, "Away to Old England I must go,
King Edard has sent for me."
"Away to Old England if you go,
I doubt you comin' back;
Five hundred of our best life guards
Shall bear you company."

He dressed his servants all in green;
Hisself he dressed in white.
And every town that he rode through
They tuk him to be some knight.

He rode till he come to King Edard's gate;
He dinged there at the ring;
And nobody was ready as Edard hisself,
To rise and let him in.

"Is this Young Johnnie Scot," he says,
"Or old Johnnie Scotling's son?
Or is it the young bastard got from Scotland
Has come in?"

"It is not young Johnnie Scot,
Nor old Johnnie Scotling's son;
This is the very grand Scot Lord
And Johnnie Scot's my name."

Then a young lady comes peepin' down stairs,
"Come down, come down!" says he.
"O no, I have to wear the studdiest steel
In place of the beating gold."

"If it's mine," young Johnnie he says,
"And mine I expect it to be,
I'll make it the heir of all my land,
And you my gaily dee."

"No, no," King Edard he said.
"O no, that can never be;
We have a I-talian in our town
That has kilt more lords than three;

Backwoods America

And before sunrise tomorry morning,
A dead man you shall be."

The I-talian flew over young Johnnie's head
As swift as any bird;
He stuck the I-talian through the heart
With the point of his broad sword;
And whipped King Edard and all his men;
And the King he like-to hung.

"Hold your arm!" King Edard, he said.
"And pray to spare me.
You can make it the heir to all the land,
And she your gaily dee."

This transplanted survival of the "Daemon Lover" is said to be encountered in the hill's of Eastern Tennessee:

"Well met, well met, my own true love,
Well met, well met," said he.
"Now that the span of years is done
I'm returnin' to marry thee.

"Have you wedded any other man?
I'm shore I've wed no other woman."
"Yes, I'm wedded to a house carpenter,
And I think he's a very nice man."

"You better leave your house carpenter
And come along with me;

We'll go till we come to the old salt sea,
And married we will be."

She dressed her babies all in red
And laid them on the bed.
"Lay there, my sweet little babes,
To keep your papa company."

She dressed her pavage all in blue;
Herself she dressed in green;
And every town they rode through,
Folks tuk her to be a queen.

They had not been on the sea two weeks—
I'm shore it was not three—
Till his true love commenced to weep;
She wept most bitterly.

"What are you weeping for, my love?
Are you weeping for my gold?
Are you weeping for some other man,
You love more dear than me?"

"I'm not weeping for your gold,
Nor neither for your store;
I'm just weeping for my sweet little babes
That I never will see no more.

"If I had a thousand pounds of gold
I'd give it all to thee,

Backwoods America

If you'd take me to the land once more
My poor little babes to see."

"If you had a thousand pounds of gold
And would give it all to me,
I wouldn't take you to land no more,
Your little babes to see."

They had not been on sea two months—
I'm shore it wasn't four—
Till they sprung a leak in her true love's ship,
And it sank to rise no more.

"What hills, what hills, my own true love
That look so bright above?"
"They're hills of heaven, my own true love,
Where all God's people go."

"What hills, what hills, my own true love,
That look so dark below?"
"That is the hills of Hell, my love,
Where us two have started to go."

"A curse, a curse on all sea men,
A curse, a curse!" says she.
"You've robbed me of my sweet little babes
And stole my life away."

"Barbara Allen" is probably the most sung old-country ballad in all the southern highlands. This version was

recorded by Mrs. Hiram Proctor of Cade's Cove, Blount
County, Tennessee:

Way down south where I come from
Is where I got my learnin';
I fell in love with a purty little gal,
And her name is Barbey Ellen.

I courted her for seven years,
And asked her if she would marry;
With a bowed down head and a sweet little smile,
She never made no answer.

Early along in the spring,
When the red roses was blooming,
A young man on his deathbed lay
For the love of Barbey Ellen.

He sent his servants down to town,
To a place where she was dwelling.
"My master is lovesick and sent for you,
If your name is Barbey Ellen."

She slightly talked and slowly walked,
And slowly went unto him.
"Young man, young man, I heard you was sick
For the love of me, your darlin'."

"Yes, I am sick and very sick,
And with me death is dwellin';
And none the better will I be
Till I get Barbey Ellen."

"Yes you are sick and very sick,
And with you death is dwellin';
But none the better you will be
While my name's Barbey Ellen.

"Don't you remember the other day,
When we was all a-drinkin';
You passed the glass to the ladies all around
But you slighted me your darlin'?"

"Yes, I remember the other day,
When we was all a-drinkin';
I passed the glass to the ladies all around,
But all for you, my darlin'."

He turned his pale face to the wall,
His back he turned toward them.
"Adieu, adieu to all this world,
But be kind to Barbey Ellen!"

She had not rode five miles from town,
Till she saw the pale corpse comin';
"Lay him down, lay him down,
And let me look upon him."

The more she looked the worse she got,
Till she busted out a-cryin';
"Young man, young man, you died for me,
I'll die for you tomorrow!"

They buried sweet Willie in one church yard,
And Barbey in the other;
And out of Barbey's breasts sprang a red, red rose,
And out of his a briar.

They growed and growed to such a length and height,
Till they could not grow no higher;
And there they tied in a true lover's knot,
And the rose ran around the briar.

X

A FOX HUNT

A HOUND yelped petulantly. Another answered from across the river. Then there was a generous chorus of yelps.

The camp song stopped, and in the lazy half-light of a stump fire we could see the singer bent far forwards, listening tensely. When the barking had died away, he called, his sturdy voice cutting clearly through the chill air:

“Henry!”

There was an answering, “Yeah.”

“Let’s get started. The dawgs is scentin’.”

Assent was general. Countrymen strolled out from among valley shadows and misty fringes of night. They were piling dead brushwood upon the fire. Red flames climbed high and gave forth golden showers of sparks.

The circle about the fire was complete, uplanders in blue denim overalls, fleece-collared jackets, swaggering and quietly amiable. Lightframed men they were, most of them bent somewhat by wind and sun and hard labor.

A few were weathered and erect with the determined grace of forest white oaks.

Henry climbed to the bench.

He was a tall man, clean-shaven and ruddy-skinned, and he was possessed of an undisputed mark of experienced leadership.

With consummate deliberateness, Henry took a hitch in the forebuckle of his baggy overalls, pushed his black felt hat to the back of his head and spat.

"Boys, I've jest been thinkin' that maybe this here's the night to try after the old cotton-white. . . . And it jest happens that they's a stranger with us this time, a feller from up in Missouri. He's new amongst the Arkansas hills and he ain't never been to our hunt before. His name is called Pete Long, and they tell me that Pete's got three of the finest fox-huntin' dawgs a man ever see, and I was jest wonderin' how it would be to give him the old cotton-white to hunt after."

There could be no reasonable denying that such a courtesy was due a guest who had come all the way from Missouri, bringing along a company of such distinguished hounds.

"Somebody should give them dawgs of Mr. Long's a good race. Ben, how about your pack?"

Ben was a slight, gracefully built hill boy who stood apart from the peering circle. He waited for a time, modestly hesitant, protesting that matched against such

eminent dogs as Mr. Long's, his puppies would be nothing more than an insult.

But Henry coaxed and reasoned, until Ben agreed to run all six of his dogs. And the two hill men agreed to pit theirs with the stellar dogs from Missouri, and so the first pack was completed, thirteen trailers.

Principals of the first race were unleashing their dogs from pivoting wagon wheels, lean, rangy skewbald hounds that leaped and yapped with impatience, eyes sparkling with the promise of the chase.

Henry coughed and continued:

"Now I reckon that takes care of the cotton-white. But they's a couple or three red foxes, and good spry ones all right, but jest plain reds, that live a ways up Bresh Creek. Jake, it looks to me like your-all's dawgs, along with them of Tom's and San Dowder's and Tola's and any others that is honin' to run, you-all had ought to organize to handle them reds."

A fine featured hill man shuffled forward hesitantly.

"Henry, before we-all stroll off fer the night, don't you reckon we'd ought to have some sort of a little meetin' and tell the visitin' folks something about the association, and say a few words about them of us that has passed on since last huntin' time?"

The onlookers indicated their approval and sank leisurely to the frost-whitened grass.

"Well, I guess maybe you're right."

Henry readjusted galluses and pondered for words.

"Ain't much sense a tellin' about this here association though. We all know hit's been holdin' fox hunts every fall for close onto two generations, and in all that time, so fur as I know of, we ain't never caught a fox. . . . I reckon that's a record to be proud of, too, cause this here association has always figgered on havin' sport and not bloodshed.

"Like Cab was a-sayin' though, they's several of us gone since last huntin' time. . . . Uncle Wade Sikes ain't with us no more. Uncle Wade lived to be a hundred and one. He taken in thirty-seven fox hunts and relished every one of 'em.

"And there was Bill Coldiron. Bill was a good hunter and a good man. And there was Vert Lacey's boy, Herman. . . . He was only twenty-three. . . . He loved huntin' and dawgs for jest their own sakes—taken to 'em natural—Herman was good to life and life was good to Herman."

The hunters waited for a time in silence. The fire spluttered reassuringly. We listened to the song of the little river which half-way circled the camp ground. Flint pebbles shown silvery and fairy-like in the first early dusting of moonlight.

Then a sharply pitched barking broke the lull.

"They done gon on old cotton-white's trail."

The real business of the night was on. The dog own-

ers last designated were leading out their hounds. And the crowd was breaking up into watching parties, still clusters of night men who moved silently up the hillside or made across the creek bed towards far-off hillsides.

We waited for a time, watching the shifting panorama of men and fire light. Henry strolled over to speak howdy, and we commenced getting the how of things.

A cotton-white is a gray fox that happens to be white, a sort of albino of the species, usually swifter and more cunning than the general run of foxes. Henry had seen this particular cotton-white many times during the course of the ten preceding years, and had watched him trot leisurely across open fields, with a score of pursuing hounds lost somewhere far behind, which was altogether fitting and proper.

For fox hunting in the Arkansas hills is based upon a sort of gentlemen's agreement between hound and fox to provide a night's entertainment for both, with man as a reclining spectator.

The hunters go along principally for yarn spinning and fun-making. They do not ride after game. Instead they reckon to perpetuate the venerable sport by sitting about watch fires built high upon hilltops, listening to the yapping and baying of the trailing hounds, identifying the particular "mouth" of each dog, and so locating the fleetest trailer and the fastest pack. They do not reckon to kill or to bring about suffering.

"They's a law in Arkansas pertectin' foxes, and if ary one should ever get caught it would be onfortunate for ever who owned the dawgs."

"But how do they keep the dogs from catching foxes?"

"Well, the foxes look after that. You see, these here foxes take out through the rough ground where they's caves and briar beds and steep hollers and bluffs and lime sinks and so they can outsmart a dawg every time.

"A fox is liable, too, to live all his life in one holler and the chances is that he knows that holler mighty well. A fox like this cotton-white—you couldn't ketch him with a thousand dawgs."

There are plentiful grounds for inferring that the foxes enjoy the chase as much as the dogs do. For as a rule, the foxes are "spotted" in the close vicinity of their dens; instead of seeking refuge straight within a propitious cave or sink hole or bluff crevice, they run, almost invariably in concentric circles about the point of starting, keeping to the brushier valleys and ravines, until too closely pressed; then if need be, they can take a short cut to the protection of their lairs.

Foxes show brilliant strategy in retreat. Sometimes they will turn about abruptly and backtrack for several hundred yards, then make a far jump and so set out upon a new trail. Frequently, too, foxes will cross trails with convenient brethren, a point of stratagem which proves baffling to the hounds, particularly to young ones

which are unable to distinguish between fresh trails and trails not so fresh.

Native foxes never run in pell-mell confusion. You may see them at times, now jumping high in the air to look behind, now pausing to listen for the hounds that may likely be booing and yapping at a cold trail, miles and miles behind. Foxes appear to have no very vast fear of men. Frequently enough they will short-cut through the thick of a hunting camp, running leisurely, but with a knowing precision.

A majority of the hunts are held in mid-autumn, usually in late October, beginning directly after sundown and lasting often until well past midnight. But so far as hound and fox are concerned the chases are all-night affairs, and sometimes they last until well into the following morning.

Newcomers joined us about the now mellowing fire—a moonshiner, a fiddler, a circuit judge, and a water-hauler.

After long pondering the Hiwasse school teacher came forward with the suggestion that we rise and settle on a bare-topped hill up underneath Orion. As we made up the dimly traced footpath, the waxing moon climbed high above a circling of forest oaks. The baying of hounds came to us in silvery staccato. The dogs were running hard, well settled to the trail. Then their pursuit faded as the fox made around a far curve of hill.

The stillness was complete for a time. Mirrored stars blinked back at themselves from the face of the little river. Night wind stirred dead leaves. Then we heard the dogs again, whining and yelping uncertainly. Thrown off the trail by the fox, they were still milling about in querulous indecision. Then an old and hunt-scarred member again struck the trail, and with a quick "yup-yup-yup" made straightway toward a far recess of the valley.

Through some convergence of mistaken trails, both the packs had met and so better than forty hounds were running together, their voices mixed in pell-mell harmony. And the dark valley echoed with the savage cadences of their mingled pursuit.

A lank hill man ran a brown hand through his bristling gray hair.

"Listen, now. They's one particular pink skewbald dawg out thar with a bark like filin' the drags off'n a crosscut saw. That thar one's my dawg, and he's descended direct from the first pack of old timers, genuine fox-hunters."

Jedge Lem, coon hunter and barrister innocent of law books, slapped his plump knee and exuded soft zephyrs of merriment.

"Now, Sam'l, that ain't no hound—that's jest a fyste pup settin' on a pile of boards hollerin'."

A moonshiner and a tie-cutter were starting a watchfire on the wind-protected side of a venerable oak stump. New

flames took heartily at the tendering of dead brush and dry faggots.

Passers along tarried for a feel of the warmth, gray silent figures who came as if they had been freshly foaled by the mountainside, and vanished as mysteriously into high acres of scrub oak.

Wit was ready and free flowing. So, too, was the moonshine, limpid, watery nectar with a faint aroma of smoke. Jedge Lem slipped a monstrous coffee pot upon a bed of new embers; and while the fire talk was beginning to get underway, he hazarded a sip from an earthen jug.

"You know, I was goin' home one purty cold night last winter—passin' through Ellum Springs. Directly I come to the drug store, and I says to the feller there behind the counter, I says,

" 'Doc, hit's a mighty cold night.'

"He says, 'Durned if hit ain't!'

"I says, 'Doc, do you reckon you could holp a man along on a cold night?'

"He says as how he reckoned maybe he could, so he went back and brought me out a pint, all white and clear and flavored like probably hit would eat the hobnails out'n a man's boots.

"First man I run onto outside was old Yam Clancey. Yam was standin' there 'side a hitchin' post, sort of huddled up in his whiskers. You know Yam's got whiskers that jest about reach to the bellyband.

"Them whiskers ain't been combed since he was eighteen and he's about ninety now. Yam shook them whiskers once and three rats and a redbird flew out'n 'em.

"Well, so I asked Yam would he have a drink. He held the bottle up in the moonlight, took a slant at the bead of hit, and figgered awhile, and then he says, 'Well, I've quit drinkin'.'

"But the wind kept gettin' colder, and Yam gradually commenced changin' his mind. So finally he raised up the bottle and damned near emptied hit at one swaller. Then he sort of puffed for a minute and allowed what he really needed then was a fire-wagon.

"'Bout half a mile on down the road I come onto Parson Sixkiller. We spoke howdy, and I says,

"'Well, parson, you'uns don't drink, do you?'

"He rubbed his hands together and hemmed and says,

"'W'y only when I'm alone—or with somebody.'"

"One time they was havin' a quilt sewin' at Uncle Ameriky Henstep's. His'n was the old style log cabin with a mud and stick chimblly.

"The house wasn't ceiled and Uncle Ameriky had strips of punkin laid over the rafters to dry.

"Well, the women folks had all brought along their babies and laid them on the bed. And while the meetin' was goin' on, the fire blazed up high and the chimblly caught fire. Somebody hollered 'Fire!' and they all

started tearin' over to the bed to get out their babies.

"And the women folks was all in a sweat panic about findin' the right baby. They'd grab up one and lay it down agin and squawl and grab up another, the first one not bein' theirs, and you know to this very day, I believe that some of them women got the wrong babies, because they's some mighty quare mixups in families around here.

"Well, Ameriky stood it about as long as he could, and so fin'ly he skun up the rafters and hollered,

"'O let them damned babies go, and help me save my punkins!'"

"You know, the other day me and Uncle Sennacy Hawson was talkin' about last sayin's. I could see Sennacy was gettin' considerable wrought up and d'reckly he says,

"'But Lem, what would you say if somebody was to tell hit about, that my friendship for you had growed cold?'"

"'Well, Sennacy,' I says, 'that bein' the case, it wouldn't be necessary to say nothin'. . . . But it won't never grow cold, Sennacy. . . . It'll last jest as long as either one of us does . . . and me, they ain't nothin' wrong with me now but vericose veins, colery morbus, leakage of the heart, and cancer of the stummick.'"

"'Lem,' he says, 'we'll be friends to the fighting last.'"

"And when he says that, they was tears come bulgin' to his eyes.

"But when I see him this mornin' I says,

" 'Well, Sennacy, I've changed my mind about dyin' off. I've decided to live anyhow for another thirty years.' "

"Yes, sir, I've been through all the paces from a slow walk to a gallop. . . . And I've lived glad. Ever' day's been welcome. . . . I've tried not to do nobody no harm, and maybe to do 'em a little good. And I'm tellin' you, brother, life is precious. . . . Hit's precious. . . . And I ain't got no reason for believin' that the next run will be any weaker than this here one."

We listened until the moon had swung itself across the sky and the chill of early morning had come into the air. The fire died, and rose and died again, as race after race followed over sundry hills and down into far valleys.

Then finally the baying died away to a last thin echo. A light wind played through half-bare trees, and then the stillness of a country night descended upon us.

A shadow approached, slight and gray in the waning moonlight. It was Henry.

"I reckon that's about all. The dawgs have all trailed off way past Pea Ridge. I don't reckon they'll be home before noon-time to-morry."

Wolf hunting although a minor sport, is most active

and relentless of all the chases. Wolves are recurring rovers. Packs come into the far hills sometimes and follow down sequestered valleys, killing chickens, young lambs, and calves, leaving a general wake of petty vandalism. The canine rovers are usually worse in late winter or early spring, when lean times drive them towards the vicinity of outlying barnyards.

It is at such times that the hunts are made, undertaken by impromptu mixings of knowing hounds and huntwise countrymen. The success of the hunt rests largely upon the dogs; for when spotted, the wolves, being inevitable cowards, break pack and tear out for the great open spaces. If a dog pack can succeed in running down the wolf, then the feat almost always results in the death of the wolf, for a fierce antipathy holds between the two branches of the canine family. Wolf hunting is generally a tactical gesture, an attempt to head the marauding wolf packs to farther realms. As a scare-away measure, the hunting is usually effective.

Indications are that wolves are at present increasing in many parts of the South and West. Several of the southern states continue to offer bounties for wolf pelts. The Arkansas Game Bureau sought to pay an honorarium of three dollars a head on all wolves captured in the state, with the result that the department's funds were exhausted within a few months.

Wild turkey hunting is still known in far-back hinter-

lands. The birds are easily trapped in pens of closely laid rails roofed over with brush or wire mesh or split boards. An enticing trail of shelled corn leads into a vent dug to lead under the walls and into the enclosure. The hungry birds may be lured into the enclosure by the trail of corn, and, once inside, the captive will spend diligent and loquacious hours seeking an exit.

'Coon hunting is primarily a sport of conquest, a pursuit hardly in keeping with the common backwoods reckoning of sportsmanship. 'Coon pelts have a considerable market value and no great skill or enterprise is required for their acquisition. The 'coon is a nocturnal feeder, with a marked fondness for crayfish and frogs, and is wont to spend his nights roaming down the course of creek beds. So the striped fur-bearers are trailed down by dogs, treed or hemmed in rotten logs or barricades of drift, and there vanquished through coöperation of dog and hunter. The raccoon, in nowise comparable to the fox in swiftness, or keenness of senses, is nevertheless a clever dodger and, when cornered, a fierce fighter.

In parallel is the venerable recreation of 'possum hunting, a lucrative sport, well grounded in the ways of backwoods living. 'Possums are plentiful and prolific. They live in virtually every type of countryside, and on autumn nights are wont to gather in upland persimmon groves by the festive score.

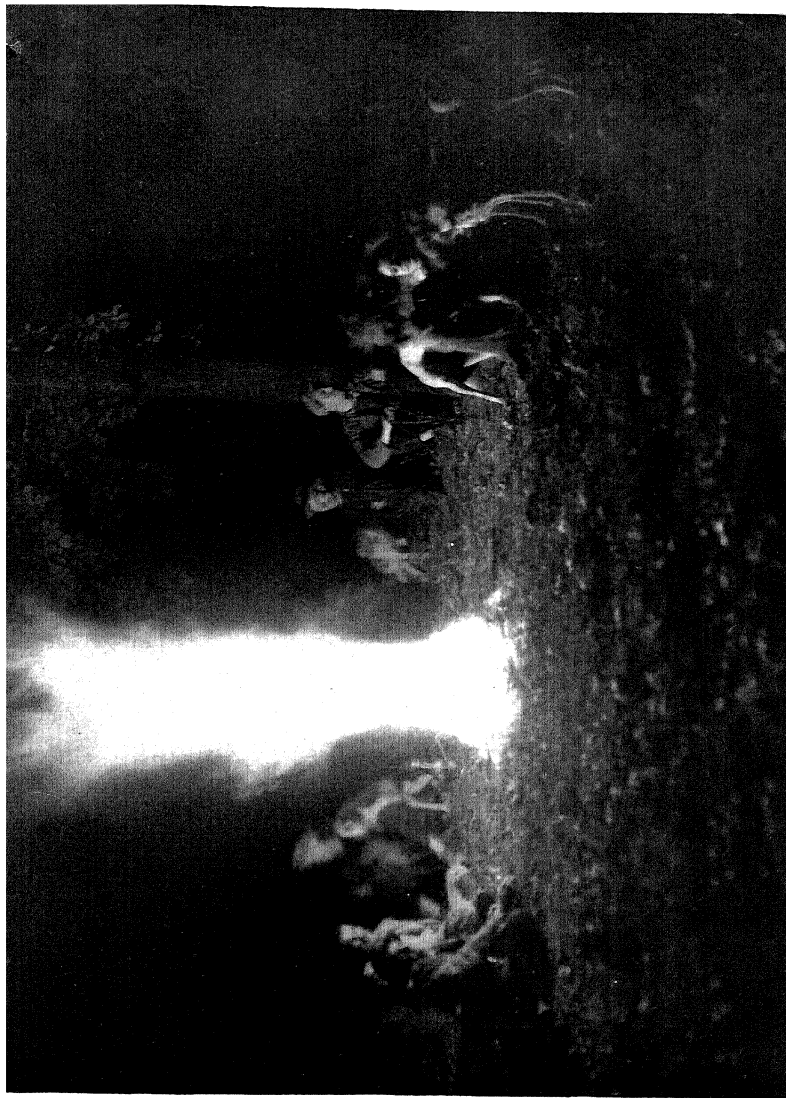
All that is required for hunting them is a still clear

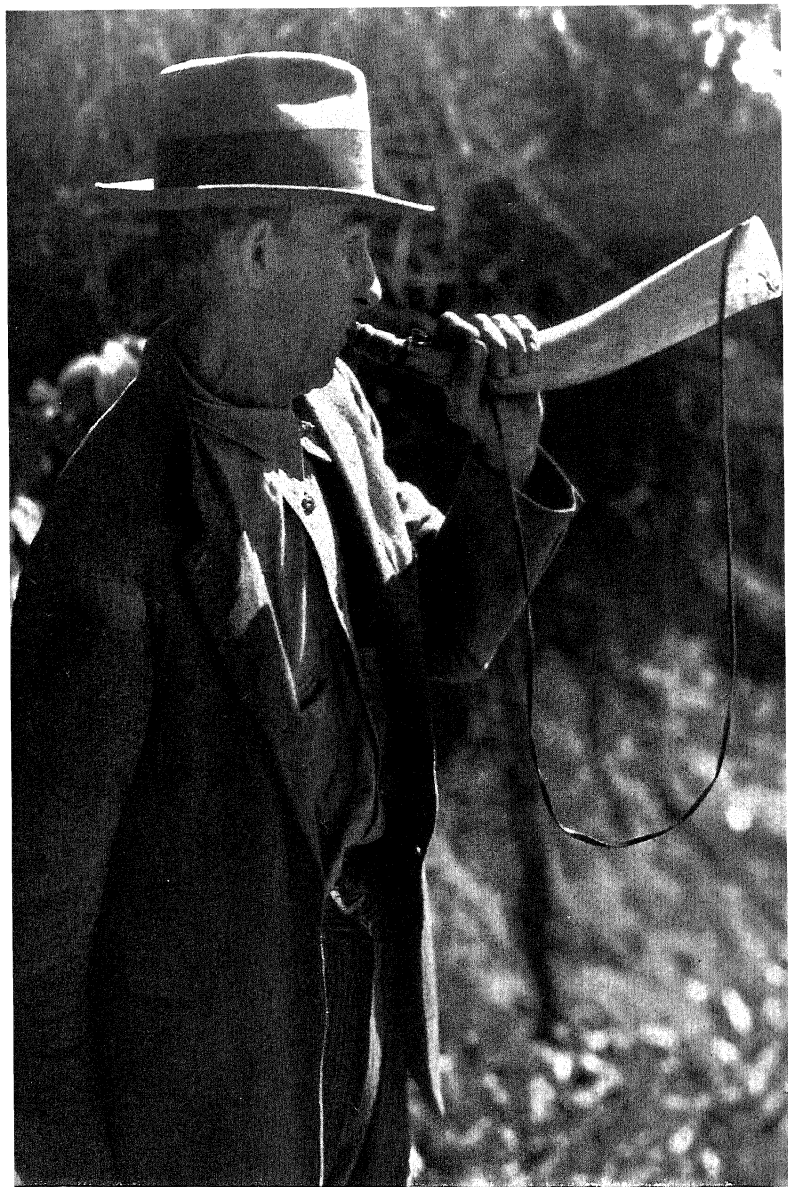
night, an understanding dog, jovial company, and the will to climb saplings. For when molested by a strolling dog, the 'possum usually makes up a little tree rather than a big one, with the result that the hunter needs only to skin up the sapling and shake down the prize, and in claiming it to keep an eagle eye for treacherous and infectious fangs. 'Possum pelts are readily marketable and offer a convenient medium of exchange.

Casting rods and flies have no very evident place in backcountry fishing ways. Backwoods fishing is essentially a matter of deep-set trot-lines or of bobbing corks and hooks baited with grubs or earthworms or grasshoppers. At least that is the way of passive fishing. But in the far hills where law remains essentially a matter of personal ethics, the ancient usage of gigging still holds sway. Gigging is a countryside affair, a diversion especially suited to warm moonlight nights and jolly company. Backcountry menfolks and youths gather together with gigs—long poles or staves capped with cutting metal points, weapons double supported by wrist straps, so that when cast forward they may be retained without laborious delving into water.

The giggers go barefoot or don wading boots, as common preference dictates, and select a long and relatively narrow stretch of river leading up to a pool of convenient shallowness. The gig wielders form a line

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THE RINGING CALL OF THE COW HORN ROUNDS UP THE DOGS FOR THE FOX HUNT

across the river and make up-stream in a long and paralleling line, splashing and shouting and waving high their gig poles, so that the fish may retreat before them up into the sanded shallows.

There the fishermen follow and make upon their prey, hurling their gigs with lightning precision and tossing the catch to henchmen upon the bank. Effective manipulation of a gig pole requires handy skill and a lightning quick reflex. For even in shallow water a fish is a difficult target and the seeker's perception must be quick to differentiate between a mud cat and his neighbor's forward foot.

When the hurly-burly is done, there is likely to be a fish fry, open to all the countryside, old and young, fat and slim, ragged and replete.

Honey hunting is one of the most amiable of backwoods sports. Bee trees are among the delightful resources of a sequestered forest. Old oaks they are, usually, gnarled and hollowed with age and slow centuries of standing. There the wild bees hive and store their honey, amber or golden cups of sweet, usually well-tasting, but sometimes darkened by contact with acidulous fruit bark, or bittered from patronage of pasture fennels.

But the run of wild honey is good, and tracing down bee trees constitutes a splendid sport. The technique is simple enough, the only prerequisite being keen eyesight, a sharp axe, and a provision to stifle the anger of the defender bees with smoke. The bee stalker strolls through the

woodland, or in the vicinity of blossom-bearing pastures, locates wild bees, figures out the direction of their flights, checks and re-checks the evidence, and so comes gradually into working distance of the prize-bearing trees.

To ransack the whole of a honey store, or to chop down and needlessly mutilate the bee tree is regarded as an act of vandalism. Hill country sportsmanship holds that the finder shall take for his own use only one or two water bucketfuls of the treasure, and leave the rest, so that the bees may have provender for a new beginning.

XI

COUNTRY STOREKEEPER

BILL BURG HAS kept a crossroads store at Compton, Arkansas, for forty-nine years. The chances are that you have never been to Compton, Arkansas. Further, that you couldn't find it on a map, unless the map were a very big and complete one. But Compton is nevertheless a reality. Bill Burg started the village when he started his store. Now it has two other stores and a schoolhouse.

We seated ourselves on a counter beneath an overhanging stock of assorted lamp chimneys, baking soda, and axe handles. A hound dog waited at the screen door, sniffing wistfully at a fine new round of golden cheese. Bill Burg tossed the animal a sliver of rind, and the hound trotted away, leaving mute thanks and a faint odor of vanquished polecats.

The next comer was a buyer, a farmer well dressed and self-assured. He wanted a plowshare, three sizes of hemp rope, a horse collar, some canned goods, a new lamp, a pair of overalls, some work shoes, an outlay of gingham for his wife's new dresses, and a bottle of pasteurized milk for the baby. He had brought along seven

dozen eggs, three gallons of sorghum molasses, and six pounds of fresh pork sausage as part payment. Bill Burg completed the deal with friendliness and ease, and rang up the cash and barter total on his register.

Country trade rests basically on a sound commodity dollar—not a credit or a speculation dollar. It is based upon tangibles.

The crossroads store revels in its chance for directness, intimacy of merchant and customer, close understanding of regular and seasonal needs of a given farm community. Proprietors are apt to be home folks, bred to the ways and views of their communities. They are justified, too, in carrying a surprisingly large range of goods. Rents and building overhead stand at a minimum.

And there's the staple advantage of barter trade. Bill Burg does about forty per cent of his trade in barter. He takes herbs, ginseng, poultry, eggs, cream, cured meats, butter, berries, fruits, grains, potatoes, any saleable produce in exchange for store goods, which makes possible a double profit to him. Both profits can be whittled to a minimum and still leave a chance for staying in business.

Then the crossroads store holds an advantage in natural history. Vast numbers of farm communities still require a home trading center. Fine highways and cheap autos have taken much of the time and labor out of going to market, but as yet they haven't succeeded in doing away with the expense thereof.

The country storekeeper has various possibilities in side lines. He may take on such side jobs as leather-mending, milk testing, egg candling, tire repairing, and auto service. Like some 47,000 other crossroads merchants, Bill Burg keeps a post office in connection with his store, which gathers in trade and so gives reasonable pay for time and trouble. Like many another, he also runs a farm. In emergencies, Bill Burg still has the heft to do considerable good as a blacksmith. Back in his younger days, he rigged up a barber chair and turned tonsorial artist on Saturday afternoons. Now he has abandoned that enterprise, but his barber chair still waits back in the storage room, a throne amid the assemblage of harnesses, wagon parts, and light farm machinery.

Finally, the crossroads store has a first cut of the invaluable resource of countryside friendship, a handy gathering place for spending an off afternoon or a rainy day, a place where farm folks may gather for checkers or horseshoes, or to trade ideas on crops and farming ways and each other.

The country storekeeper is not merely a business man. It has been Bill Burg's pleasure, and otherwise, to make arrangements for weddings, funerals, christenings, church revivals, family reunions, and neighborhood fun-makings. He has set broken arms, dug beans out of little boys' noses, washed and bandaged wounds, witnessed wills and contracts.

In fact, his weathered little store has been the scene of both weddings and births. Bill Burg has stopped run-aways, risked a year's supply of victuals to a lank and hungry farm boy who is now an eminent United States senator, gone far out of his way to deliver telegrams and messages of great sorrow or joy. But he figures all this is part of the job of the crossroads store and its keeper. He has never yet taken a penny's pay for a favor.

"Trouble? Sure. But it's not always a loss. For instance, about forty years ago, a little girl came in this store with a pair of worn-out shoes. She wanted new buttons sewed on 'em. I always did that free. But I saw those shoes were leaking water. They needed soles worse than buttons. It was a deadish kind of day, cold and murky, and not having much else to do, after I'd sewed on the buttons I put on a new pair of half soles—also free.

"Well, that little girl has been pretty fond of me ever since. She's my wife now, and the best investment I ever made or hope to make.

"Yessir, and a free favor was my next best investment. Sam Carter came into these parts about 1910. Sam's a mighty good citizen, but at the start he and I didn't hit it off so well. For one thing, I'm a Democrat and Sam's a Republican. And Sam's a fiend for accuracy. Unluckily, on the first good order he bought here, I got mixed up on the sizing of some plow parts and caused him considerable

delay and trouble. So he decided I was a stick-in-the-mud, and I sized him up as something of a crank. That went on for quite a spell.

"Then Sam's little boy took diphtheria. Sam had to come to my store to phone for a doctor. The doctor had to get some anti-diphtheria toxin, which was rare back in those days. I helped him wire for it. But somehow or other the drug company sent the serum to me instead of to Sam. Well, Sam didn't have a phone, of course, and he lived about nine miles off in one of the roughest hollers you ever laid eyes on.

"But I knew it was a life or death business, so I shut store, hopped on my horse, and delivered the medicine. Sam was pacing about like a locoed horse, and when I got there the doctor gave me a bear-hug and told me I'd saved the boy's life. When Sam tried to pay me, I told him I only sold merchandise.

"After that, Sam got to be my customer. And he's what the town folks call an agricultural genius. He's built up the finest dairy and fruit farms in this neck of the woods, and his trade alone averages a third of my total business. He's still a Republican, but he's the best customer I ever had, and next to my wife, about the best friend."

A farm wife, in checkered gingham and broad straw hat, came marketing, with six red hens waiting outside, in a crate, duly shaded from the summer sun. A clattering

of heavy steps foretold the arrival of new trade. I revelled in the fact that the crossroads store remains an exchange center for ideas and companionships, as well as for goods and dollars; that through its doors pass the whole scope of rural humanity, young and old, poor and prosperous. Old-timers gather to relive lost youth through talk. Farm wives, come for a turn of store-shopping, look serenely upon a world they no longer have cause to fear. There are yearning maidens, sunburnt scholars, fuzzy-faced farm youths come to watch the ways of trade, little girls with classic names and sunbrowned legs, come for penny candy bags, and perhaps to listen to the words of great and knowing men.

The countryside generally is free to congregate on shady steps or porch benches or sturdy counters, or to encircle patriarchal monkey-stoves as weather decides, there to think and speak upon people, politics, hopes, jokes, and allegiances, lost, found, and otherwise. As a rule these store-porch Americans are good listeners and keen observers. They laugh a great deal, revel in simple drolleries such as that of the countryside dim-wit who propounds the problem that if two black snakes, each one thirty inches long, met up together and started swallowing each other at the rate of an inch a minute, then at the end of thirty minutes, what would there be left?

XII

COUNTRY DOCTOR

A CLATTERING OF hoofs sounded from down the meandering forest road. Presently a rider appeared, a country boy, bare-headed and wind-browned, his agile body swaying easily to the pell-mell gait of his mount.

The youth tugged at his bridle reins, turned into a yardway and dismounted hurriedly. Then he rammed his hands deep into the pockets of his faded blue overalls, wiped his dust-splattered cheek upon the foreshoulder of his musty yellow work shirt, and approached the doctor.

"Pap Mulholland, up on Pewter Ledge, has got a terrible misery in his stummick."

Doc Abernathy, for thirty-seven years a practitioner of medicine in the hills of Arkansas, nodded agreeably and led the caller's sweat-lathered horse into the shade of an oak tree. The hill youth struggled for breath sufficient to continue:

"It looks like he's got to die. The folks wanted you'uns to come out—quick—"

"Sure thing."

The Doctor strolled down to his barnlot and doled a final scoopful of corn chops to his pigs, then rolled down his shirt sleeves and began filing his finger nails. The overalled messenger continued.

"You'uns can drive your autymobile up to where the old Y road ends off in Hanner's frog pond. Nick and Puny is waitin' there with a extry hoss."

"All right, sonny. You stay here and rest up a spell. Might be Ma could give you a glass of milk and a cut of cake. When your hoss has cooled off, take him back to the trough and water 'im."

The youth grinned his appreciation. Doc Abernathy struck out to the house for his medicine case.

Pap Mulholland was in a bad way. Chronic appendicitis long gone acute. Two mountains and seventeen miles of underbrush between him and a through road. Pap was seventy-two and normally strong as a white oak. He was taken down with a misery all of a sudden. For ten days he had been doctoring it with black pepper poultices. Then it stopped being bad and turned worse. All the neighbor people could do about it was to offer prayer and tempting victuals. Finally Pap had given in and said he would have a doctor.

Doc Abernathy arrived half an hour after sunset. After a half-minute diagnosis he diplomatically cleared the cabin of visitors except for two countryside farm hands

whom he had known since their babyhood. He told them to build a fire in the kitchen stove, put water to boil, and when they had finished, to steady up the dining room table, and after they had washed their faces and hands and arms in lye soap to spread the table over with clean sheets.

In another five minutes the patient was on the table, taking the ether count. The room was in almost complete darkness. The Doctor had directed his assistants to blow out the oil lamp. It isn't a good idea to have fire too close to an anaesthetic.

Doc Abernathy directed the first farm hand to fetch him his flashlight and hold it, steady-like. The boy pressed the magic button, and there was light, right where they needed it. The Doctor proceeded to operate.

The appendix was a bad one—high up and out of kelter. But within thirty minutes the job was done and the patient was back in bed.

Pap Mulholland is up and about now, good for at least another twenty robust years. Doc Abernathy was thankful that he had the flashlight along. The night before he had taken out a set of gallstones by the light of a dashboard lantern. And not many weeks before he had been forced to use a carpenter's saw during the course of an emergency amputation.

It seems that a young man of the brushy spaces had decided to shoot himself in order to avoid a court sum-

mons. But the stripling's knowledge of anatomy was not accurate. Either that or else he jerked the trigger in place of squeezing it. In any case the flat-nosed bullet smashed center against the thigh bone and shattered it. Gangrene set in. Doc Abernathy received a hurry call without preliminary instructions.

The place was thirty miles out in the hills. The leg had to be amputated in a hurry. Delay meant death. The Doctor had the necessary instruments—everything except a saw. A neighbor said that down at the head of the holler there lived a carpenter who had a first-rate set of tools. Doc Abernathy sent down to borrow a fine-toothed saw. He sterilized the instrument and successfully completed the operation.

When I first met Doc Abernathy, he was down in his barnlot, milking and feeding. Not that he is a livestock raiser through any direct volition of his own, but his patients have a way of contributing calves and pigs and chickens in payment for his services; and being of a thorough-going temper, the Doctor carries on the project to a logical climax. He owns and milks sixteen Jersey cows, and at this writing he has just finished butchering six fine shoats, which, being duly salted down, will provide his family pork meat sufficient for the winter.

Thirty-seven years of backwoods practice have convinced him that a country doctor must be an opportunist. The practice of medicine in the backwoods is no child's

play. Epidemics come sometimes, and calls overlap. Travel in the rough country continues to provide thrilling adventure with washed-out bridges, flood-gutted roads, falling trees, and blinding storms.

Not long ago a particularly urgent call led him to attempt crossing Buffalo Creek in the face of a torrential autumn rain. Midway across, his car became stranded in a gravel bar. The waters rose, and when the radiator cap went under, the Doctor took up his medicine chest and floundered forth into the flood. But first he lifted up the front seat, took out the emergency rope, tethered the vehicle to a willow stump, then swam to the bank and attended the call. Next day, when the waters had receded, he found under the seat of his car a nice catfish, still flapping.

Rural America generally, is inclined to put tremendous confidence in its doctors. While we talked, an old hill woman who had ridden horseback twenty-three miles through the timber, came for a treatment of insulin. Then a far-back farmer came in to show a badly infected finger. He had been nursing it for eight days, treating it intermittently with mallow-weed poultice, a "shore cure." But from all appearances the shore cure had missed the mark. The hand was in a bad way, bad enough to require numerous new dressings and examinations—strong prospects for at least ten treatments for the price of one.

Half an hour later a bedraggled woodcutter hobbled in

to show a cut foot which had been treated with hickory ashes and black pepper. The results were nothing to brag about. The woodcutter had a lone half-dollar, which he insisted upon paying.

I was glancing through the Doctor's day book:

Sam Jones—two babies with malaria

Jess Bolling at Alabam City—wife delivered of baby

Grandma Jones—troubled with cold feet

Ike Taylor's Dad—apoplexy

Prof. Bass—two babies with summer complaint

Art Pressly—fistular heart

John Fowler—malaria

Bill Fowler—operation for hand carbuncle

Bill Fowler—scalp wound due to diving in shallow water

Mrs. Trinkles—needle in right hand

Art McGuire's baby—scarlet fever

Tom Hodges' baby—nose full of beans

The great majority of backwoods practice is concerned with citizens who are very old, or else with babies. Dysenteries and malarias are the most common ailments of the in-betweens. Nerve cases are rare. Malnutrition sometimes appears. Just the other day an old dame telephoned to say that she was feeling right puny-like and needed a "tawnic." The Doctor strolled down to the village store and dispatched the sufferer six dollars' worth of groceries, which he paid for himself. There is no dividend in pre-

scribing tonics for people who do not have enough food.

At another time a travel-worn family trailed into his office to report that they all felt mighty onery. They had been living some sixty miles away, down on the far prong of Hazel Creek. First the mother had come down with typhoid, and by time she was well again, three of the young ones had jaundice. They recovered all right, but now the whole family was feeling mighty good-for-nothing, so they all up and decided to travel in to old Doc Abernathy's and get cured up.

To finance the travel they had sold their milk cow and their flock of chickens. The Doctor recognized offhand another case of killing the goose with capabilities for golden eggs. The family's chance for staying well depended largely upon the cow and chickens. His prescription consisted principally of a good Jersey cow and a dozen fat hens contributed from his own barnlot. There again the medical exchequer showed red.

Doc Abernathy finds, among other things, that countryside intimacy helps along considerably with professional diagnosis. John Perkins' snuffles may be vastly more understandable if the doctor is intimately acquainted with Johnny's father and grandfather. And close acquaintance can sometimes explain an ill which would otherwise baffle all conventions of diagnosis.

Not long ago a farm wife came into the Doctor's office. She was feeling downright bad, and recited an awe-inspir-

ing list of symptoms. But on the whole the symptoms failed to coördinate. A few days later the woman came in again. This time she felt still worse, and her recitation of symptoms had increased, both in length and in paradoxes.

Doc Abernathy sought to locate some manner of atypical stomach complaint. But repeated examination gave no strength to the hypothesis. That afternoon he happened to be reading the weekly newspaper, and noticed in the court column that the patient's farm, which she had labored twenty years to acquire, had been ordered sold on mortgage. The Doctor laid aside the newspaper:

"There's the belly trouble."

When office hours are done, patients come to the Doctor's house. They don't bother to knock, usually. They just walk in, and if the Doctor is out, they take a seat before the fireplace and wait his return. In all his years of practice, Doc Abernathy has not once locked his doors. He confesses that if he isn't greatly mistaken all the keys are lost.

His office walls hold two framed mottoes:

"Nothing Matters Half as Much as You Think It Does" and "Folks Who Never Do Anything More Than They Get Paid For Never Get Paid For Any More Than They Do."



RURAL AMERICA, GENERALLY, IS INCLINED TO PUT TREMENDOUS CONFIDENCE IN
ITS DOCTORS

IN POORER HOMES
WHERE THERE IS
NO ROCKING CHAIR,
THE BABY IS
SOOTHED IN A
HUNKING CHAIR



XIII

LAW MAKERS AND BREAKERS

TO SAY THAT peasant Americans are prevailingly ignorant of law would be a long way from accuracy. Granting that law exercises a convenient minimum of influence upon backwoods morality, the run of upbrush citizenry are surprisingly well informed upon legal procedure and are deft enough when it comes to courtroom craftiness. The chances are that virtually any hill-billy or rural commoner of legal age will understand the how of avoiding a jury summons, how to turn state's evidence, how to frustrate an embarrassing cross-examination, or how to entangle a too inquiring judge. Accordingly the great majority of rural court records reveal a decidedly low ratio of conviction.

Backwoods crime frequently shows pristine cleverness, which is all the more effective because of its primitive simplicity.

Some years ago, out in the hills of Newton County, Arkansas, two yahoos decided to murder a miserly neighbor. There was no very clear reason for the decision,

other than that the neighbor was a crab and a tightwad and that they considered him generally undesirable as countryside company.

One morning the two uplanders got together and decided that on the morrow they would go forth and do away with the aforesaid miser. They went that day to the village storekeeper, who was conjointly the countryside money-lender, and asked for a loan of twenty-five dollars. Both had borrowed money from the storekeeper before and paid back their borrowings promptly. This time they borrowed not for need of money, but as a tactical move.

It happened that the old storekeeper was extremely nearsighted. While one of the yahoos engaged him in conversation, the other turned up the day-leaf of his calendar. Then they asked for the loan. The storekeeper filled out the note form, and glancing at the calendar dated the note March 12 when in reality the day was March 11. Next day, March 12, the conspirators went forth and did the murder.

The pair were apprehended by a party of roving woodcutters, and in due time were put under arrest. Brought to trial the upcountry strategists worked an occupation gag. How could they have killed the miser on the morning of March 12 when there was a signed note to prove that on that particular date they were twelve miles distant borrowing money from the storekeeper? The store-

keeper verified the contention and accordingly the brace of murderers came free.

Courts, old and new, frontier and modern, backwoods and city, have always been homes of contention, cases for argument and ethical indecision, havens for talk and ponder.

Much of the old survives in our contemporary backwoods courts. Circuit sittings in April and November are still gala events of many an isolated countryside, replete with the picnicking spirit of an invincible frontier. Country people still come by the festive wagonload to hear the court "set" and the lawyers "plead." Blue-denimed farmers come to wait out a change in the weather. Farm wives come along for surcease of confining kitchens. There are school youngsters and upcountry damsels come upon with restless yearnings, and funny-faced farm boys, out to look and listen, and to learn the ways of town and of success. So the courtroom becomes the most colorful and homely of human documents. Jurors, judges, sheriffs, deputies and barristers, and spectators keep to their established places only until matters come to be dramatic; then all of them come to be a common and closely pressed multitude, who look generally alike, sit alike, smell alike.

Neither principals nor spectators appear to be distressed by the closeness or cumbersomeness of legal procedures. They are a slow people in a slow country. Cases range

from the picturesquely trivial to the conventionally sordid. Among criminal cases, moonshining charges were probably the most common in old court days, as they are in the backwoods courts of today. Moonshining is approximately as old as are isolated peoples and, from all appearances, about as hard to do away with. Next to moonshining in number of cases come killings. Too much liquor, a game of horseshoes, or a family row are the bases for a majority of the shootings and knifings of today, just as they were a century ago, for in our contemporary back hills much of the spirit of the frontier endures.

Yet minor transgressions are far more common than criminal cases—neighborly misunderstandings fostered in an atmosphere of ethical deliberation and a superabundance of idle time. Consider this sample:

“Comes the plaintiff, and for his cause of action against the Defendant alleges and states:

“That he and the Defendant are both residents of Washington County, Arkansas, and that the lands of the Defendant are adjacent to the lands owned by the Plaintiff.

“That the Plaintiff is engaged in raising strawberries for the market, and has his land adjoining the Defendant’s, planted in strawberries.

“That the Defendant is the owner of two hundred or more chickens and refuses and declines, and has refused and declined, to construct an enclosure to control said

chickens, and keep them upon his own land, and that the said chickens belonging to the said Defendant were permitted to run at large, and ran at large over and upon and into the strawberry patch so owned by the Plaintiff, and committed waste and damage thereon and thereto to the sum of two hundred (\$200.00) Dollars.

"That the Plaintiff on numerous occasions requested the Defendant to confine his said flock of chickens in an enclosure, or to prevent their straying and running over the land of the Plaintiff, and doing damage to his berries, but that the Defendant steadfastly declined and refused to take any steps or to do any act to prevent the continuance of loss and damage to the said berry crop by reason of the trespass so committed by the said chickens, and that he has no adequate remedy at law; also that the Plaintiff's field is enclosed with a lawful fence."

"Answer of Defendant:

"The Defendant reserving all his rights under the demurrer heretofore filed, for answer states:

"That he denies that his chickens ran over and upon and into the berry patch owned by Plaintiff or that they committed waste or damage thereto in the sum of \$200.00 or any other amount.

"THEREFORE, Defendant prays that the complaint of the Plaintiff be dismissed for want of equity, for costs and all proper relief.

"The Defendant by way of further answer herein

states: That he resides in the country seven miles from the corporation line of any city or town; that he is a farmer and owns chickens as does the Plaintiff and other farmers in the community where Defendant lives; that his chickens, Plaintiff's chickens, and chickens of all other farmers in the community run at large and are commoners; that it would not only be an injustice but a great hardship for Defendant to be required to confine his chickens to his own premises and that it is now, and has been since the settlement of the country, the custom of the farmers to keep on their farms chickens for family use and for commercial purposes and for said chickens to run at large.

"That by reason of the custom and the knowledge of the Plaintiff of the conditions existing at the time of setting out said strawberries, he is now stopped from claiming any damages or asking an injunction against the Defendant."

The Plaintiff lost the case.

Court days bring forth colorful and dynamic types of followers—Virginia gentlemen, men of humanity and scholarly learning, men of pretense and greed, shysters and pucks and Hooligans, knowing ignoramuses and unknowing scholars.

The types, being both obvious and quaint, may stand an easy cataloguing.

There is the old-time land lawyer, Uncle Bob Evans.

Uncle Bob is an old man, erect, slender, and well-bodied, an iron-gray individual of magnificent silences. Criminal cases he meticulously avoids, for he dislikes crime and criminal law.

Countrymen came to his office in an endless caravan, weatherworn farmers in overalls and bad predicaments came for free advice, and they almost invariably got it, which is one good reason why Uncle Bob stays everlastingly poor.

Uncle Bob can name off-hand the range, section, and township of almost any bit of land in North Arkansas. Land records are his library of vital literature. From them he learns of life and of people, of trends of prevailing economics.

Uncle Bob fears all debt, discourages it as a young man's burden and an old man's ruin. As a consistent personal policy he neither lends nor borrows. Uncle Bob holds to his illusions. He believes in the lily whiteness of southern womanhood. He figures that the moon has a considerable say-so in the coming crops; that Tammany is taken seriously in New York, and that Charles Dickens is the world's greatest author.

He is a stickler for tradition. For more than half a century he boasted of having the longest backyard in the whole state of Arkansas. It extended back for nearly half a mile and included a garden patch, a peach orchard,

woodlot, cow pasture and children's range, and a plunging and youthful river. Uncle Bob learned how to swim in that little river. So also did his son and grandson.

Uncle Bob spent a considerable time at wandering and laboring in the elongated backyard. Wrens built underneath the outhouse eaves. Mocking birds played in the haw hedges. Cold rains tousled the sedge grass. Uncle Bob made a garden annually, unctuously. He kept a patch of strawberries, too, about the size of the settin' room rug.

Another recurring old-court follower is the lawyer with impediments—E. B. Waters, a little man, dressed always in brown, who wears gold-rimmed spectacles and peers wonderingly over the tops of them. When spoken to he invariably appears to be taken by surprise, and stands with his mouth open, staring over and around his glasses before answering, for he is afflicted with an incurable stammer.

Every few words he must pause and re-summon his laggard tongue muscles. The wordless intervals in his speech are masked with a strange motion of the lips and a humming "m-m-m-m" sort of sound, and the humming always breaks over as a part of the word he finally speaks. Once talking, he would hurry his words for the inevitable stop.

At trial one day, E. B. was struggling to pry an answer for a complicated and hard-spoken question, and

when he strove to repeat it, the judge reprimanded him mildly for so dragging out the case.

"M-m-m-m, and if your Honor wouldn't m-m-m interrupt me so damn much, I'd m-m-m be able to get through m-m-m a lot quicker."

In old campaign days, candidates for county and district offices rode horseback in groups over their territory and made joint speeches at each township. E. B. rose to a stump and spoke, with all the solemnity of a stuffed owl. The man who was opposing him in his candidacy then spoke, and told in a high-pitched, whining voice how badly he needed the office, that he had a wife and seven or eight children whom he had to support, that his opponent had no one to look after but himself and that therefore the people ought, by all means, to vote for him and not for Waters.

Then Waters arose to make final refutation.

"I-i-it is quite true, what my honorable opponent says, that I am n-n-not married, b-b-but that is through no fault of mine. I have brought that m-m-mat that m-m-m-matter to a tie vote twice. B-b-but if I was m-m-married, as my honorable opponent is, I b-b-b-b-believe that I would know whether it was s-s-s-seven or eight ch-ch-ch-children I had."

There, too, is the minor practitioner, a plain little countryman legally dressed, who still cherishes, both in court and out, gray striped trousers and a brown Prince

Albert coat, with cloth-covered buttons at the back where the tails begin.

And there is the homely and dumb and dissolute attorney. Bill Blainer is the harmless reprobate of languid courtrooms. His face is perfectly flat, and, in profile, without a distinguishable feature. His chin and forehead are furrowed and overlaid with layers and folds of slack skin. His eyes are of the dull clearness of cooling lard.

At a term of court in Red Star, Bill once walked into the courtroom very drunk. Judge Donaghey, who was on the bench, was a mammoth man, a veritable giant, and behind the high set bench he towered over the assembly like a judge at Doomsday.

Bill strolled over to the attorney's table, and rested against it, and looked about him, his eyes wavering here and there without focusing. At last the bench and the towering Judge caught his attention. Squinting, he stared intently. Then he queried, forgetful that the trial was in full progress:

"Jedge, is that you?"

"Yep, Bill, I'm here." His Honor was brusquely assuring.

"Well, by God, you don't look no bigger'n a gnat."

Old Vol Ellis stands for the benign and knowing gentleman of the law. He is a lean man, with a long, tat-

tered duster dragging at his heels and a black felt hat with a frazzled brim. He has a merry and kindly face, brightly observant blue eyes, and a close-cut mouth that quivers with humorous delight at the doings of his fellow men.

Vol's unflagging kindness to unfortunates, and to courtroom hangers-on is a matter of tradition. He has stayed among the best-loved men of the backwoods bar, and is one of the most brilliant. Vol is a stickler for brotherly mixings and for amiable jests.

Once he proposed publicly to give a prize of fifty dollars for anyone who could show him an ear of corn that didn't have an even number of rows on it. He knew the how of crops as well as of statutes. Corn grains come in evenly numbered rows.

Constable Ed Erp knew that as well as Vol knew it, but he reckoned on having a little mirth of his own. Accordingly he went out in the field where the corn was "jest comin' into roastin' years," selected a likely ear, and cut out cleanly one whole row of the kernels.

"I didn't want to take Vol's fifty dollars, but I did want to git the joke on him. And you know I watched that thar corn, and hit ripened up, the grain rows filled out till you couldn't tell nothin' about there bein' one row cut out. And there was the whole year with only thirteen grain rows to hit. Jest about the time I was getting ready to pluck hit and take hit to Vol, a doggoned old cow broke

in the patch and bedurned if that wasn't the first year she et."

Constable Erp once tried another joke on Vol.

Vol had said that he would give ten dollars to the man who could bring him a dog that had white on its breast and around its neck, and didn't likewise have white hairs on the tip of its tail.

Constable Erp went home and gave his hound a close looking over. And he found, sure enough, that along with its other white splotches the dog had three or four white hairs on the tip of its tail. Constable Erp put shoe blacking on the white tail hairs.

"You know, I was figgerin' on leadin' the dawg in to town and havin' a good time with old Vol. But do you know, jest as I was startin' up his office steps, that blamed dawg set down and licked off ever' drop of that blackin'!"

Uncle Presley Smith typifies the old school of amiably strategic deputies. An easy-going, drawling old commoner, he nevertheless counts on getting his man.

Wanting a youthful law-breaker, he listened good-naturedly while the young man tried to argue him out of making the arrest.

"Tell you what I'll do," Uncle Presley propositioned, "I'll pitch horseshoes with you. If I win, then you'll go with me without no more arguin', and if you win, then I'll go off and leave you be."

The boy was willing. They had a round of horseshoes and Uncle Presley beat the tar out of him. Then just to be sure and fair, the deputy offered to play marbles for the same stakes. He won again, and the youth went along to jail without carping.

Old Pete Howardson, who dealt justice to some of the hardest cases of the Old West, talks with a strange little fault of speech, not a lisp, just a wobbling of the tongue brought about by his mounting years.

Once he was telling of the time that as a deputy sheriff he captured a "little apple-faced nigger wanted for murder down in Te-e-xas, and taken him as far as Little Rock."

"I seen a adverti-i-ment for the nigger and recognized him in the po-s-st-office here. They was askin' how I knowed that it was the right nigger, and I says as how it was se-eldom you'd see a real apple-faced nigger."

Pleasant in reminiscence, and more competent and wholesome at legal dispensation, was the placid judiciary, Judge Tooley, circuit master for a generation, abstemious soul and a benign one. His face was full and jolly and generally pink. His jaws waggled when he talked, and he was usually short of wind, so that he seemed always just to have arrived to speak after a great burst of speed. In summer time he would shed his coat, and in the hottest weather he was wont to drop his suspenders from his

shoulders and let them dangle beside his chair. It is said that if Judge Tooley could have foretold the manner of his death, he would likely have laughed himself to the grave ahead of time. Nearsightedness came upon him with the years, but even though his court days were over, he kept on going regularly to his law office over the village undertaker's, feeling his way up and down the long and rickety flight of stairs.

But one day he did not allow for the slippery soles of a new pair of shoes, and so he tripped, fell down the stairs and broke his neck. New shoes were his ending.

Uncle Ed Edlin was a United States deputy marshal back in days when Oklahoma was simply Indian Territory. He walks with a cane, a brown root-wood cane; and when he is talking he holds the cane upright on the floor with a weathered and wrinkled hand.

He has reached a stage of unsteadiness about his eating, and the front of his old brown coat goes splotched and stained with fallen food. He adjusts his battered felt hat into incongruous angles of rakishness, and while talking he pushes the hat far back on his head so that his failing eyes may take advantage of all the daylight available. His gray hair is longish and roughly trimmed. His most enduring delight is his granddaughter, who is a "school-marm in Oklahomy" and writes to him often.

Uncle Ed makes no exorbitant mention of his services

to his country, or of the fact that he consciously went about building together law and order in a lawless and orderless land, but he does think back upon his lifetime as work well done, work which he liked. He was one of the real settlers of his countryside. When law meant nothing unless enforced by guns, he was one of its staunchest gun wielders.

Past eighty, he was bailiff of the village court, pottering about, his mind still strong, but his year-bowed body lagging from the vigorous life that he had lived and loved.

Last election time, a newly acquired sheriff failed to reappoint Uncle Ed as bailiff. It was true enough that the old man's voice was becoming too weak to be very effective when he called his "Oyez, Oyez!" And it was true, too, that had his services been needed to quell any disturbances in the courtroom, Uncle Ed would have been physically ineffectual.

But the oversight was hard on Uncle Ed. The old arm of constabulary stayed away from the courtroom one whole morning. But an important criminal case was on, and when the one o'clock whistle blew, Uncle Ed could stay away no longer. He strolled inside the railing and sank uncertainly into a vacant and rickety chair.

He had reckoned that his coming would be unnoticed, but in that Uncle Ed was wrong. The Judge and the lawyers were expecting him. All at a turn the trial

stopped, and the prosecuting attorney stepped toward him.

"Here, Ed, here's a token from all this court. Take this purse and get yourself a watch or something. You know better than we what will mean most to you."

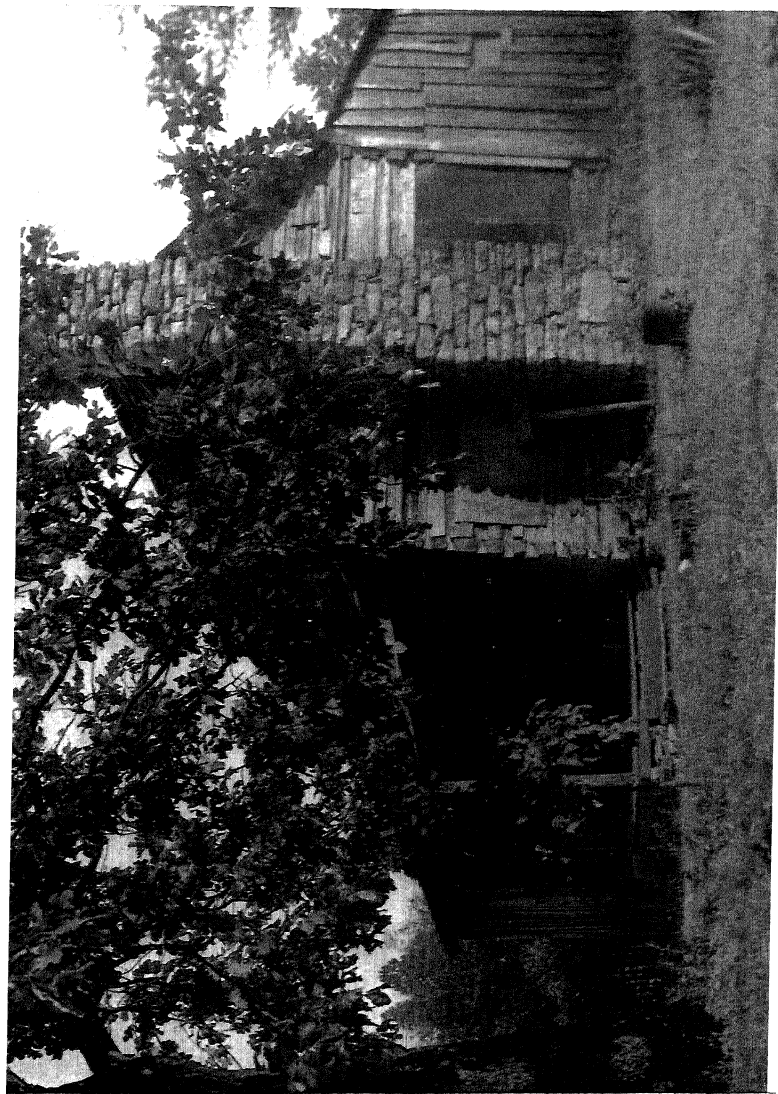
The act had been well planned. Uncle Ed accepted the token. The purse held money enough to last him through a lean and waning winter.

One time, Jeff Davis, United States senator, and many times governor of Arkansas, happened in on the trial of a destitute old man, who was indicted for stealing a pony. The thief's wife, an old and decrepit hill woman, was his only defender, and the two waited there together, stricken speechless by the imminent threat of prison. The old man was penniless, and when the court inquired if there was anyone present to defend the case, the picturesque old senator volunteered his services.

The prosecution introduced perfect testimony, showing that the hill patriarch had stolen the pony so that he might haul wood to town, the only way he had of making a few dollars with which to buy only the slimmest necessities.

When the state was finished, Jeff Davis drawled forth a leisurely reckoning:

"Well, folks, there ain't any doubt but what my client stole the pony. But, gentlemen of the jury, these old



ONE OF THE OLD
BACKWOODS SORT,
TWO LOG-BUILT
ROOMS AND A
BOARDED - UP
LEAN-TO



THE COVERED
BRIDGE STILL LIN-
GERS IN THE
FARTHER BACK
SPACES

folks need our help. They represent humanity in want. If you'uns do the humane thing, you'll retire and take up a collection to send 'em back to their home. I reckon as how I'll start the collection with this here twenty-dollar greenback."

He handed the jury foreman a twenty-dollar bill. The mediators of justice retired to the back lot. In less than five minutes they were back with a collection of forty-three dollars. The jury acquitted the quavering defendant and the plaintiff threw in the pony as an added bounty.

The old-style rural Justice of Peace Courts represent other warming chapters in humbler realms of jurisprudence.

So far as I am able to gather, the nation's dizziest J. P. trial took place underneath a sycamore tree on the bank of Leatherneck Creek in Madison County, Arkansas.

A countryman had been accused of stealing a hog. The trial lasted three days and required half a hundred witnesses and twice as many arguments.

The court had but one law book, that a copy of the Illinois Statutes of ancient vintage. The judge's bench was a whiskey barrel, full, upon which the court sat a-straddle. At recurring interludes he would declare a recess and sell whiskey to the jury, defendant, witnesses, and spectators, and to himself. The liquor was sold on

credit, with names and amounts chalked up on the sides of the barrel.

By the end of three days several developments had materialized. Three of the jury had fallen into the creek and four more were effectively passed out. The Justice, himself exceedingly drunk, finally dismissed the case on the grounds that the jury was incompetent to try it.

A rival instance took place in the Justice Court of Squire Nottingham, who held sway in Cove Creek township. Squire Nottingham was a gangling red-headed countryman with a great walrus mustache and an infallible craving for fun.

One day a herd of cattle broke from pasture and molested a neighboring cornpatch. One steer in particular led the outbreak and committed an undue share of the damage.

Upon complaint of the corn owner, Nottingham and his constable, a person who took after the constable of movie comedy, a thin little man with flowing chin whiskers and perpetual hurryings, decided in unison that the steer must stand trial for his misdoing.

Accordingly he untied a well-rope and led the animal into court. Found guilty of trespass, the transgressor was fined ten dollars and costs. But the animal had no change upon his person. Accordingly the court ruled that the beast should be butchered. The constable received a hindquarter as his fees, witnesses were paid off

in steaks, and so on until the transgressor was accounted for.

But the owner of the steer began to suspect something. It happened that the animal was branded, and then he located the hide. The prosecutor's share had been the "hide and taller"; he appealed the case to circuit, and made them all come across with thirty-eight dollars' damages over and above what harm the steer had done the corn.

Another of Squire Nottingham's epic decisions was administered in the case of a Negro and a preacher who had gone to law, each claiming a certain white calf. After deliberating for the whole of a summer afternoon, the jury reported that it could not agree.

"What seems to be the hang-up? The law or the evidence?"

The jury foreman scratched his head with a convenient stub of a hand.

"Well, Squire, with some hit's one thing and some hit's another. They's two of us thinks the calf belongs to the preacher, two thinks hit belongs to the nigger, and two thinks hit don't belong to neither one."

The squire gave the calf into the Negro's keeping, with the stipulation that its first female offspring would from weaning time and forever thereafter, be the rightful property of the preacher.

In another case, after listening to the testimony and

argument for both sides, the old Justice wiped his mustache and announced:

“If I was to believe all the defence has said, I’d turn the defendant loose, and if I believed all the prosecution says I’d send him to jail for life. But gentlemen, if things was jest as they be, and I don’t believe a damn word neither of ’em says, I don’t know what the hell I’m gonna do.”

XIV

MOONSHINERS

NOAH AND SODY BULLTEETER were born and raised up on a prong of Drake's Creek. Countryside tradition had it that Noah was a promising lad, hard-working, square-dealing, and due to go a long way. Sody, on the other hand, was the kindly, happy-go-lucky sort with a strong leaning toward day-dreaming and sitting down. The same autumn that Noah went away to study at an agricultural college, Sody got a job as clerk in Mullinix's store. Three years later Noah came back with an army trunk full of books, a sheepskin diploma, and debts totaling about nine hundred and fifty dollars, and Sody got fired for being too lax with his credit.

Noah took over the old homestead, reckoning to up-build it through the miracles of Modern Agriculture. Sody undertook to sell lightning rods and in the course of six months disposed of one set to the community Greek scholar, who being three-fourths cuckoo, was unable to pay. Noah planted out forty acres of grafted apple trees and lost half of them the first summer because of a relentless drouth.

Sody took to peddling Doctor Clugstone's Indispensable Pills, Blueing Water, and Household Soaps. The farm-wives were kindly, but in addition to being prevailingly short of money, they were accustomed to wash their clothes in branch water, they made their own soap, and they regarded pills as a luxury.

After reading two scholarly volumes on "Profits from Peaches" and "Profits from Strawberries," Noah replanted the apple orchard with peach trees and took a fling at twenty acres of modern-method strawberries.

Sody, in turn, tried selling tombstones, cotton hosiery, and Puree's Prepared Hog Tonics with a deadening sameness of result. At the end of another dismal year he gave up, and with the assistance of a professional seer with second vision and a craving for down-payments in cash, projected a series of systematic searches for buried treasure. The nearest he ever came to finding one took the form of a gas-seep sufficient to support a fire for three days.

Meanwhile Noah kept with his books and the ways of Scientific Agriculture. The surviving apple trees yielded almost enough to pay for sprays and costly cultivation. The strawberries produced splendidly, but, in the remote country, markets are poor, distances great, and roads obscure. Three successive crops left the balance sheet slightly in the red. The peach orchard went sterile for seven years, then bore an enormous crop, as did every

other peach orchard in forty-six states. Noah hired scores of untrained pickers and packers and teamsters, the market went to naught, two commission brokers departed suddenly for parts unknown, and six thousand bushels of sorted peaches produced a net loss of fifteen hundred dollars.

Having once answered the magic of fertility, the peach trees bore no more.

Thereupon Noah concentrated upon modern practices in dairying and for four successive years broke even. Then one day his herd invaded a field of frosted sorghum cane, and seven of his finest milk cows fell casualties from poisoning which frost engendered in sorghum cane. Noah lacked money to replace the cows, and besides that he discerned that a newly fledged cheese industry was steadily undermining the market for quality milk. So he bought a tractor and took a fling at hay farming. The tractor paid for itself in four years' time, and then collapsed. But Noah stayed with Progressive Principles and revelled in the companionship of books, while his prime years faded and the fertility of his land diminished.

Sody opened a country store, and after eighteen skimping months, took the bankruptcy law.

Then one day the Bullteeter brothers fell to comparing notes. Both were showing gray about the temples, both had worked out their best years. They were moneyless and weighed down with the premonition of old age.

So Noah and Sody turned partners and joined in a mutual enterprise, moonshining. During the subsequent four years they have prospered in a modest and wholesome way, battled off the wolves of starvation, which are, back in the hill country, astonishingly real, paid off their mortgages, and put by a few well-earned dollars. They have come to be typical members of the new elect of moonshiners. They have made and sold about three thousand gallons of good, wholesome liquor. The returns have been adequate, although not generous. They sell their wares only to responsible patrons. They pay their taxes, work the road, help along with the community schools and live as upright and neighborly citizens. They have adjusted themselves to the obvious fact that moonshining provides the soundest kind of agricultural returns available in the backhills, and they enjoy acceptance at their just worth, socially as well as professionally.

The other day we journeyed up into one of the finest moonshining centers in all the Arkansas hills.

We followed a wavering country road leading squarely into autumn. Below us were swaying acres of goldenrod and yellow field daisies. Sumac leaves were showing first turnings of red. Oak leaves shed a metallic lustre. A light wind touched the tree tops and a murmur rose like the song of a distant ocean.

The roadway dipped, followed down the foot of an

out-cropping bluff of limestone and crossed over a little river called War Eagle. The waters appeared to be youthful and joyous. We discovered that they are likewise productive.

A tiny village nestles in the arm of the river, a model specimen of a moonshining supply base. The paintless and decrepit storehouse serves as a wholesale buyer of the raw materials—corn, sugar by the carload, kegs and jugs and fruit jars by the thousands of dozens, yeast and barley malts by the carful. A water mill near by is run exclusively for the benefit of the profession.

Successful whiskey-making requires special milling equipment. For making the "sweet mash," corn should be ground into a coarse meal, an intermediate stage between corn chops and cooking meal.

We traveled a couple of miles further and stopped at the foot of a high and cavernous limestone bluff. We strolled out through the bushes and called.

A halloo sounded far off down the valley, distant and silvery in the first coolness of afternoon air.

Then the answering grew nearer and presently Richard Saulee, Esquire, moonshiner, came forth from among the pawpaw bushes and stood before us on a gravel bar.

Uncle Dick Saulee is a splendid specimen of countryman. He is of medium height, well muscled, sun-browned, and happily featured. When he took off his hat, we saw that his hair is bristling gray and on second

looking that his eyes are sort of Mediterranean green. We spoke howdy and traded small talk on weather and roads and crops. He asked us if we were in a hurry. We assured him that we were not. He said that he had figured as much from the looks of our tracks.

Uncle Dick is a typical member of the aristocracy of the trade. He learned liquor-making in the old-time school of distilling and he is a stickler for the best traditions. He believes real moonshining a game of maturity and skill and he takes pride in the fact that he has to his credit close to five thousand gallons of good whiskey and nary a swallow of bad. He advocates generous measure and liberal treats. He double distills and allows a given setting of mash to make only as much liquor as it can make well.

Uncle Dick Saulee is prospering in a modest way. He has bought and equipped two good farms, one for himself, the other for his boy Alfred, who is his junior partner.

After a time Alfred came up from the creek bottom and joined us. A fine looking youth, bright-eyed and well-bodied and grinning. Mountain sunlight fell upon him caressingly, and he stood with the nonchalant gracefulness of an olden god. Alfred, it seemed, was just from a convention. We inferred that it was a distillers' convention. But we were wrong. Alfred had been to a Sunday School convention.

The younger Saulee carried a bottleful of light amber nectar. He grinned with delightful reticence and explained that it was a sampler from the latest run. We all took a drink upon the strength of it. The older Saulee cleared his throat with no little pride.

"Well, boy, that ain't so bad."

The sentiment was general. Uncle Dick reckoned maybe we had better go up to his house and set a spell. So we went. An old wife greeted us at the doorway, a motherly woman dressed in prim blue calico. Her hair is flashingly black, her fine gray eyes deeply set and bright with eagerness to know and to feel.

We went into an airy room, newly painted, high-ceilinged and immaculately clean, a room furnished with very old beds and highboys and straight chairs, furnishings built of oak and walnut and wild cherry, the handiwork of fading generations of backwoods cabinet makers. Mrs. Saulee told of first experience with their newly installed home lighting plant.

Then the conversation gradually got back—around the methods in moonshining and to moonshine philosophy. Uncle Dick ran a hand through his graying hair and settled himself into a strip-bottomed rocking chair.

"Yes, I make whiskey and so does most of the neighbor people all along up and amongst these hills. Here's our way of lookin' at it—me and Alfred plant corn, raise it up, shucks it and takes it to mill. Now if my woman

goes and makes a pone of corn bread, we ain't violatin' no law. Then why can't we put part of the crop to liquor? We do the work and we take the risk. My pa and grandpa done the same thing before me. It's a mighty tough proposition makin' a livin' in a hill country, and whiskey's our best chance for cash money.

"They's been moonshinin' in these parts since earliest pioneerin' days, and I wouldn't be none surprised but what they always will be. We ain't got no call to be ashamed of ourselves, nor of anything we do. Moonshinin's a man's game. Can't jest any punkin-roller stick it."

Uncle Dick Saulee is in no manner a bootlegger. He and his boy Alfred have built up a far-reaching reputation for good quality whiskey and the trade comes to their door. They are exclusive in their choice of patrons. They observe the finer ethics of the trade and they testify with a considerable lift of pride that the majority of old-time moonshiners are a rather high calibre of men, scions of strong pioneer families, of old settlers lost among old hills.

The run of old-school moonshiners do not object to the enforcement of order and honesty. The young rough-necks who stay drunk on their own wares and crave trouble must, of course, be attended to, and no reasonable-minded citizen can deny that. But the experienced backwoods sheriff usually looks with leniency upon the old-hand

operator who can make good whiskey and behave himself while about it.

Taking them generally, the old-timers are men of moderate habit. Occasionally one degenerates into a year-round sot, but such instances are exceptional. In matters aside from liquor making, the profession has kept traditionally to the side of the law and order. Study the court dockets and you will find that very few moonshiners have ever been up for larceny and banditry. In the horse-thieving days of Arkansas, Missouri, and Tennessee, moonshiners were point-blank enemies of the rustlers. Again, back in the early eighties, when much of the southern hill country was infested with an organization of up-brush kluxers known as Bald Knobbers, the moonshiners stood squarely against them. And although the Knobbers took in after the shiners with all the pious zeal of thirty-seven Israelites after a Hittite, the Bald Knobbers have come to be only a people of fireside legendry, whereas the moonshiners continue to flourish as they probably always will.

Uncle Dick Saulee is no harsh critic of the law. He believes that the run of county sheriffs are square-dealing men, braver and more sporting than the run of Federal men. The older Saulee had several points of objection to Federal Prohibition Enforcement, the most flagrant being the use of undercover men.

When county officials fail to fill the court dockets with

indictments as they are wont nowadays to do, then the powers of prohibition enforcement are prone to resort to stool pigeons. One such case came up to War Eagle country not many months ago, representing himself as an old-time shiner from Kentucky, honin' after new trade and new territory. He set beer, equipped a still, made and sold liquor. He made friends with the countryside moonshiners, traded recipes and worms and mash vats and kettles. He partook of their open-hearted hospitality and indulged in Saturday night socials.

Then one day the newcomer packed up and left. But on his way out he stopped at the county seat and turned in warrants for every moonshiner up the creek bottom. And word leaked out that the informant was a prohibitioner—an officer but certainly no gentleman.

Uncle Dick admits straightforwardly that he doesn't fancy that sort of doings. Apparently the forces of justice didn't either. For the grand jury failed to return an indictment in all twenty-two of the cases.

Virtually any upbrush countryside abounds with instances of legalized cussedness. There are phony raiding parties and minions of law who shoot without discretion or sobriety, and deaths result. Federal enforcement luminaries come down into the hills honing after raidings and gun-play, and then the county officials are put to their mettle to avoid needless bloodshed and at the same time to bolster the dignity of the law.

Once a party of Federal men came down to an Arkansas village, called on the sheriff and demanded that he lead them on a raid up War Eagle Creek. The sheriff complied, and in the course of searching the raiders passed within an easy stone's throw of Uncle Dick's location and trampled squarely over a bed of his buried whiskey. The Saulees had buried a run for curing and planted over the place with blackberry briars.

Next day while strolling, Alfred passed the place, picked up the sheriff's wallet, which was empty save for a scribbled note:

"Dick, them blackberry bushes don't look quite natural enough. No harm done yet, though. These yahoos couldn't tell a blackberry from a pawpaw."

Alfred returned the wallet.

Laying aside all personal interests and enterprises, Uncle Dick protests against legislation that would condemn to prison an old farm wife who might squeeze out a cup of blackberry cordial for tonicking a teething child, or a commoner who would transport a sip of elderberry wine to a fellow who lies in sickness and suffering. He revels in the fact that the mad era of fanaticism known as Volsteadism is finished.

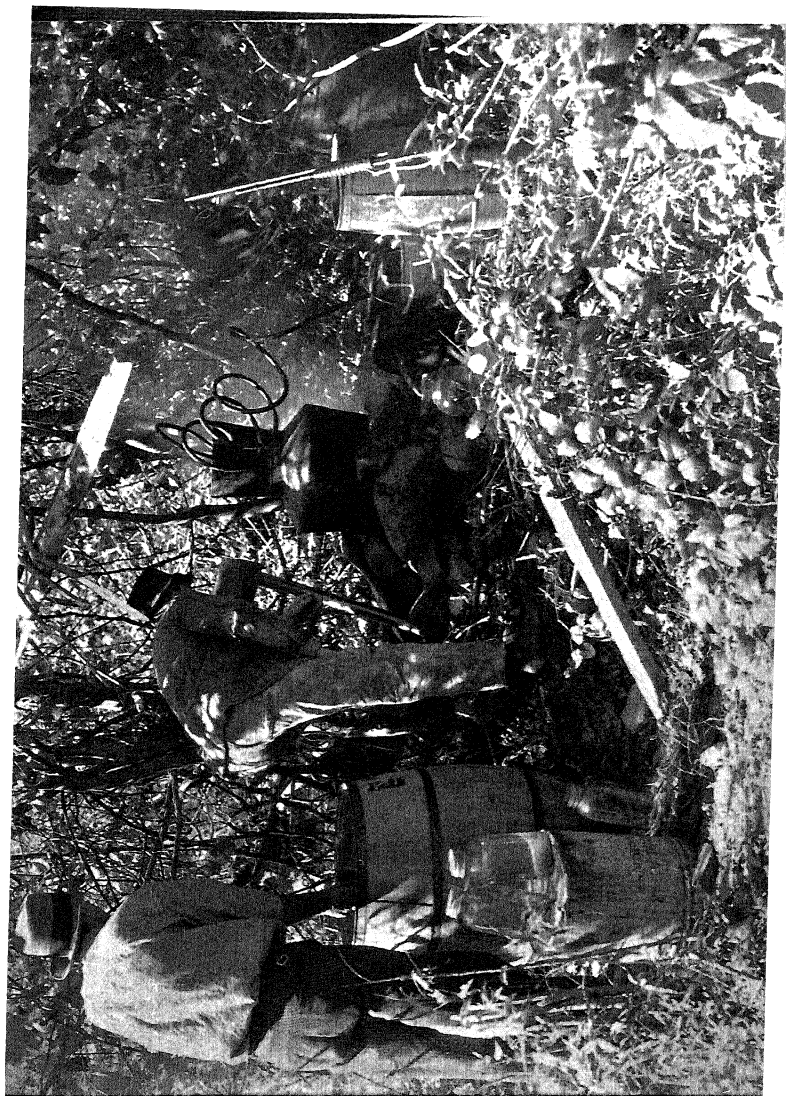
The old-style making of moonshine is hard and laborious. To begin with, the starch of the corn must be converted into sugar. Some distillers accomplish this

metamorphosis in a few hours with the use of yeast and barley malt. But most of the old-timers are sot against such artifices. Instead, they prefer to shell the corn into a vessel with a vent in its bottom; then they pour hot water over the top of the container. As the water percolates out of the vent, more is poured on, and this is kept up for several days until the corn grains have sprouted. The diastase in the germinating seed produces the same chemical effect as malt.

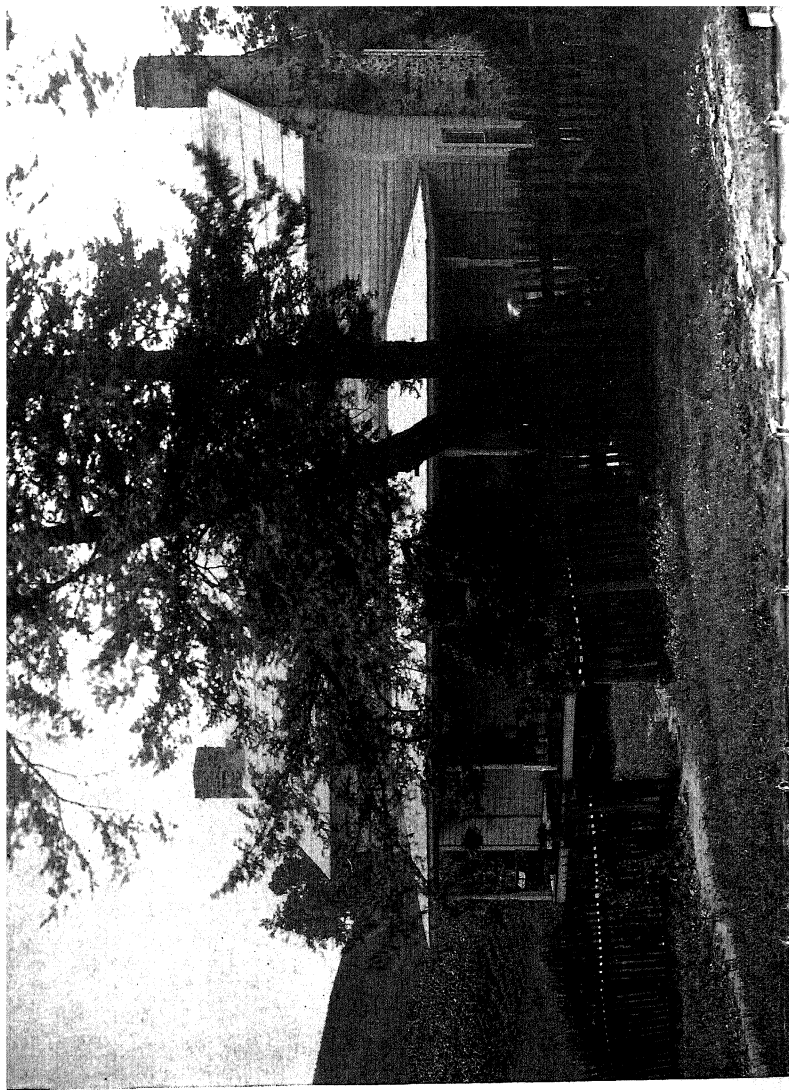
Then the sprouted corn is dried and ground into very coarse meal. This "sweet meal" is converted into a mash by the adding of boiling water, and after standing a few days, the decoction is broken up and poured over with sugar, preferably corn sugar, and water. Fermentation takes from four to ten days. During the whole of this period the mash must be kept at precisely the right temperature. Too much heat spoils the body of the whiskey, and too little will kill fermentation. That is another good reason why a moonshiner must have both diligence and skill, for the chances are that his fingers must serve as thermometer and his tongue as saccharometer.

So the sweet mash becomes sour mash, and in the changing the sugar becomes alcohol and carbonic acid. The resulting liquid is commonly known as "beer," occasionally as "wash." It is intoxicating, but sour and puckery as a green persimmon. The test for final completion requires that one put an ear to the bottom of the container.

"MOONSHIN'S A
MAN'S GAME. CAN'T
JEST ANY FUN-
KIN-ROLLER STICK
IT."



POSSESSED OF DIG-
NITY AND CLEAN-
LINESS AND GRACE



If it sounds like "rain on a tin roof," then the batch is ready to be worked.

The "beer" is poured into the tank of the still, a vessel with a closed head connected with a "worm," a spiral copper tube, surrounded by a jacket, through which cool water is kept passing. A fire is built in the still furnace and slow boiling begins. Spirit vapors and steam are condensed during the course of their passage through the worm, and so trickle down into the receiving jug. The first comings are called "low wines" or "singlings." They are weak in alcohol and strong in fusels and other rank oils. Accordingly the painstaking moonshiner must re-distill his "low wines" at a diminished temperature.

The liquor of second distillation is called "doublings." If under-distilled, the doublings will be rank and weak; if over-distilled, almost pure alcohol. Old-style moonshiners make their final test by reckoning the "bead" of the liquor, estimating the how of the little iridescent bubbles which rise to the surface when the bottle is tilted. If the bubbles rise and stay put, the shiner will vouch for the product; if not, he will pass it by, regardless of label or testimony.

Finally the liquor is run through a charcoal filter. The result is moonshine in the raw, a fluid limpid as water, and almost as colorless. It has a faint smoky aroma, and feels raw and fiery to the palate. As a beverage it is unique, as an intoxicant a profound success.

Most moonshiners prefer to operate along small creeks, with banks closely choked with bushes and briars. Sometimes the locations have primitive fortifications, such as brush pitfalls or barricades of logs. Sometimes entanglements of wire are stretched among surrounding trees to make impossible a quick charge through them.

The still is usually covered with a shed, built low, so that it may be well screened by the surrounding underbrush. Behind the still shed, far enough to be in deep shadows, even when the furnace is going, there is likely to be a pallet for the night watch or alternate firemen. As a general proposition, the fire must be kept burning continuously for from sixty to seventy-five hours.

Moonshiners are troubled with any number of incidental aggravants. Most operating areas are in open range country. Cattle are attracted by the odors of distilling and hogs are passionately fond of still slops and "beers." They can likely scent them and trail down their source for half a dozen cross-country miles. Horses have a high tension loathing for moonshine, and for that reason they can be used very effectively for locating stills. I have heard stories of an old-school revenue officer who used to ride through the rough country on horseback. Whenever he came to a creek or a river ford he gave his mount renewed opportunity for sampling the water. If the water bore even the faintest flavor of still slop, the horse would shake his head violently and refuse to drink.

Then the cue was to follow up the stream bed and so to locate the still.

Uncle Dick Saulee estimates that at the present time the actual production cost of moonshine is about two dollars a gallon. He has kept accurate accounts for the past nine years. Here is his table of production cost for one gallon of double-distilled whiskey:

One-half bushel of corn	\$.30
Six pounds corn sugar36
Malt, rye, yeast, and incidentals12
Milling costs10
Labor, reckoned at 25 cents an hour37
Still, equipment, and transportation of ingredients12
Firewood08
Oak kegs for seasoning, jars, jugs, etc.22
	<hr/>
	\$1.67

The days of high profits are generally dead. Even moonshining must at least approximate a competitive level. The three or four years which followed the enactment of the Volstead Act were a low era of whiskey-making—they were an era of high-jackers, fly-by-nights, botched brews and weird and unholy substitutes. The fine old profession of moonshining was threatened with inglorious oblivion. Illicit liquor then brought unheard of prices—

twenty and even forty dollars a gallon. There were court instances of two gallons of whiskey having been made from one bushel of corn and sold at forty dollars a gallon. A gallon of respectable moonshine was made to do service for two or three gallons by diluting it with water and adding lye or tobacco juice to give a bite and washing powder to provide the bead. This recipe was actually entered as court testimony in an important Carolina moonshining trial:

One bushel of corn meal, one hundred pounds of sugar, two three-pound cans of lye, four pounds of ripe poke berries, two of baking soda. Water to measure and distill. The decoction was reckoned to make fourteen gallons.

Moonshining still holds its peculiar economic vantage in the far hinterlands, particularly of the South. Most moonshining areas are, at least agriculturally speaking, sections of increasing poverty. Hillside fields are quick to lose their fertility. Hard wood timber is quickly exhausted and slow to replace itself. As a usual proposition the hill country farmer draws the worst of the economic servings. Roads are poor, transportation is expensive and damaging, coöperative methods are unused, and legitimate markets hover perpetually at a low ebb.

So the hill country homesteader must plant with a basic

idea of self-sufficiency, and too often depend upon cash-bringing side-lines to equip himself and family with an occasional change of clothes and winter shoes. In the run of instances the old-style moonshiner continues to grow his corn, to haul it to mill, to look after its grinding, to set the brew, to attend to testing and firing. He buries the cache for curing and stands all risk for its distribution. The procedure is old and long established. Likely his father did the same before him, and his grandfather, and his great-grandfather. Statute laws grow yellow and musty with age and disuse, but the mandates of primitive economy, although a thousand times older than man-made laws, keep always a virile youthfulness, an unquenchable power.

The practice of advertising usually creeps into the industry only at the outer fringes. The true-blue hill country moonshiner makes and sells, and reckons personal integrity and artisan standards to serve as advertising. He is possessed of a keen critical reckoning and he presupposes that the customer understands wares and their degree of excellence.

But if the prospective buyer does not, then the chances are that the moonshiner will qualify with a candidness that is, in these days of synthetic flavors and faked labels, nothing short of astonishing.

We once went out into the Arkansas hills in quest of a smooth and dependable brandy for the balm and unction

of an elderly gentleman who was convalescing from a bad siege of sickness. We dropped by Sol Muster's place out among the tater-knob hills about Weddington Gap. We explained our mission and desires.

Mr. Muster scratched his white head with a remaining stub of hand:

"Well, I make brandy,—shore. And all considered hit's purty fair drinkin' licker . . . and if you-all wanted hit for your own pussonal use, I wouldn't have no back-drawin's about sellin' hit to you, because you-all is well and walkin'. . . . But an old gent that's been ailin'—I jest don't believe he'd ought to drink this here brandy a-tall."

As far as the moonshiner is concerned, high pressure salesmanship is out of his rightful field. That is relegated to the distributor who takes liquor out of the hill country down to valley towns. These entrepreneurs have sundry advertising ways. Among the most picturesque of them is the open distribution of moonshine samples at conventions or county fairs or rallies or picnics, or the still more novel institution of the sampling house station—an open house, well stocked and conveniently located, where prospective purchasers may come to taste before they buy.

Inside such a place one is welcomed with easy chairs and open kegs and cooling chasers and diplomatic sales talks. Then after two or three swigs of third-rate nectar

the prospect will find himself recipient of tactfully timed discourses on the obvious quality and the excelling skill of the maker. Then one staggers forth to recite to his townsmen the marvels of his findings. And so the word is spread.

We were asking Dick Saulee about the probable outcome of a stranger's blundering upon a still in active operation.

"Well, they'd likely ask you some questions about who you was and what you was doin' in that neck of the woods. Then if what you said sounded all right they'd likely get you to do some trifling work about the still—so to make you one of them in the sight of the law. . . . Of course they could tell considerable about you without asking. . . . They wouldn't gain nothin' by damagin' you, besides, moonshiners ain't generally vicious. And people is jest bound to know a mighty lot about moonshiners, no-how."

By way of illustrating the point he told of a confederate named Lige Yeater. Lige recently left Arkansas in order to better liquor conditions in Oregon. When he got ready to leave, he started the word about that on a given date he reckoned to hold an auction sale for the purpose of disposing of all his distilling equipment and his surplus of liquor. The sale was duly attended by more than four hundred people, among them moonshiners from all over the Ozarks, dealers from neighboring cities, townsmen of

all grades, a sheriff, a mayor, two judges and six doctors, and two representatives of the press. Two stills and six hundred gallons of liquor were auctioned, refreshments were served on the ground, and a good time was had by all.

Moonshine tactics are of the defensive sort, but when one member draws an undue share of punishment, the oppressor is likely to find out that there is a considerable measure of fraternalism in moonshining. Here is an anecdote in illustration.

A stranger came into a backwoods countryside in the Arkansas hills, a likely looking young fellow in his early twenties. The boy settled in an abandoned cabin, chopped wood for a week, then moved higher into the hills and went into a prolonged hibernation. When he came down again, the lad was resplendent in store-bought clothes and nice shiny new shoes. Folks figured that he had probably been running off a few gallons, but the countryside didn't hold that against him. The youth went the rounds of the social goings on, played a jew's-harp at the dances, and demonstrated that among other accomplishments he had a knack for winning hearts.

Several of the countryside swains were not especially tickled about the latter resources. Two in particular begrudged the competition. But the newcomer went his ways, never armed, always in peace.

One afternoon while he was driving home a wagonload of firewood, he heard his name called. The voices came

from the summit of an outcropping ledge above the roadway. The boy moonshiner checked his team and climbed down from the wagon to look about. Two rifles cracked just as his left foot touched the ground. And the likely one fell to the dust. The brace of jealous members slipped down the side of the ledge and dragged the newcomer up the pathway to his own cabin, where they left him to die.

Legal arms are scarce in the backcountry. No arrests were made. A couple of months later, a party of young bloods went up among the wild moonshining hills to hunt wild turkeys, among them the two self-boasted slayers of the likely young moonshiner.

And when the party returned, they brought back a very sad story. It seemed that two of their number had been shot in the back, right where the suspenders cross, and it seemed further that the two had been selected with complete accuracy.

At another time, in the wild hills of Southern Missouri, a band of noble defenders of our nation's Constitution followed along Indian Creek up into a land where no sagacious angel would choose to tread.

They trailed down a location. But it happened that the location was occupied. The officers charged through a blackberry thicket. There was an answering bombardment of rocks. Then rifles began to spit from high up in the white oaks. The raiders looked up to behold that the

treetops were full of backbrush gentlemen fondling well-groomed rifles. They spattered lead on all sides of the law, they splintered oak limbs, smashed rocks, and grazed anatomies. Anyone who thinks that all this missing of marks on the part of the moonshiners was accidental, ought really to think again.

Another instance is the minor epic of one Wid Thompson.

In the old days Wid lived in cave shelters and spent all his days at hunting for hidden treasures. But during his twenty odd years of hunting, he never seemed to find any. And so Wid took to gold growing. He would take a forked willow twig, place a silver dime in the Y of the fork, and wherever the tip of the twig pointed vertically downward, that indicated a type of soil suitable for the growing of gold.

The prospective profiteer would furnish Wid with a twenty dollar gold piece and so he would plant the coin in the chosen earth and "cast." Provided the spell were right and the planter did not come near the place of planting for an interlude of two weeks, then the twenty dollars was due to have foaled four tens.

Of course curiosity is a beginning evil of human ways, and the spells were broken more often than otherwise. But occasionally a coin would reproduce itself and word of the miracle would travel far.

Wid worked the enterprise agreeably enough until one

day he ran upon a certain Squire Crump, a valley farmer with an eye for practicality and better hogs. Squire Crump gave to Wid twenty dollars for planting and inked in forty on his day-book.

But the experiment didn't work out that way. Two weeks later to an even hour and minute, the good Squire took up his grubbing hoe and went forth to his chip yard to dig. But he dug to no avail. Then for the sake of thoroughness he took up a pea sifter and sifted the would-be productive earth.

No progeny was there. Moreover, the breeding stock was gone. Accordingly the Squire loaded up the family shotgun with buckshot and slugs and went in quest of Wid.

Wid supposed maybe the spell had been prematurely broken, but Squire Crump was adamant. He reckoned that it had not, and he reckoned further that he would take back his twenty dollars, either in the original gold piece or in greenbacks—either that or else Wid would be leaving straightway for parts unknown and possibly with some parts lacking. Wid pondered for a leisurely moment, and handed him the money.

After that Wid took up moonshining, and he was getting along passably well until one day a dark visaged gentleman with all the earmarks of a cash customer, strolled up and propositioned Wid for a drink.

Wid took down the gourd dipper and offered the newcomer a nice cool quaff of spring water. And as he did it,

he felt a chilling pressure upon the solar plexus, and glancing downward, he made out the business end of a Colt .45. The thirsting one was a minion of the law.

Wid spent two years in the Missouri State Penitentiary, and when the day came for his release, he all but injured himself getting back towards Bull Creek to begin again at moonshining. Now Wid is prospering in a modest and simple way, averaging about a hundred and fifty good gallons a year.

XV

OLD WAYS AND TRADES

BILL PLUE, last of the old-school timber men, is eighty-nine. He has lived to see virgin forests of white oaks replaced by red oaks, which in turn have given way to jungles of hybrid saplings. He has watched valley sweet gum grow to the thickness of a wagon wheel; and since his beginning days at timbering, scrawny young post oaks have acquired twice the thickness of a man's body.

Old Bill took part in the last of his neighborhood's great log rollings. He was one of the score of young men about Brush Creek who seventy years ago, in a spirit of open-hearted neighborliness, banded together and cleared twenty-five acres of prime walnut timber, for the betterment of Newt Wilcox, a countryside cripple, who honed for cleared ground sufficient to last out an old age set with manifold infirmities. So the youth of Brush Creek chopped the timber, cleared hundreds upon hundreds of the great body logs, piled the limb wood in a mountainous stack for burning, and rolled the logs into a great windrow,

there to be consumed by the wrath of a mighty three-day fire.

The following year brought the first open market for native walnut timber and then the citizenry of Brush Creek learned that in their boisterous charity they had put to ashes no less than twenty thousand dollars' worth of prime walnut, a lifetime's fortune—for a hill man, wealth fabulous. The cripple heard but he could never believe and so died happy at the scope of the clearing. Old Bill smiles as he tells the story, but his eyes seem rather sad.

Bill Plue was born in the timber and he reckons to die there.

A good part of his boyhood he spent at honey hunting, a sport which suited him well, for being clear-eyed and fleet-footed, he would stroll among brakes of wild honey-suckle or down flower-fringed valleys and there watch for wild bees and follow after them, tracing down their circuitous air trails which led to old and honey-holding post oaks. Then he would build smoke fires of damp leaves or bits of punk; and having stupefied the defending bees, he would chop out portions of the dark amber stores. He sold the honey sometimes. In those days a cedar waterbucketful went for a thin silver dime.

At seventeen Bill was left fatherless, and early manhood fetched upon him the support of a mother who had been brought low by a malevolent cancer.

Bill came into the years of maturity knowing little of the ways of man toward man. Twice he partook of social mixings, once when he was converted to the Holiness faith and again when he made bold to take in a square dance at Joe Haney's store. The latter was by odds the more glamorous of the experience. For the three Widd girls were there, damsels nimble and comely, with flesh brown as white oak acorns in November. Bill and another timid swain were called to dance a set with the three, but just as the merriment was at its peak, the countryside bully got crossed with the creek-bottom reprobate.

Festivities ended in gun play. Just as the oil lamp was shot into jingling bits, Bill pulled one of the brown-skinned damsels to him and kissed her soundly and thirstingly. Then he fled into the night without sure knowing which of the Widds had been the object of his amour.

It was two years before he went again to Haney's store. All three of the Widd girls were married and gone away.

One summer a herb doctor came into the countryside, a practitioner innocent of degrees or licenses but possessed of a profuse beard and a medicinal breath. Bill worked most of three years for the strange old renegade, digging medicinal roots, cutting plant tops for tonics and plasters, and skinning tree bark that might go into the making of homely cure-alls.

Then the herb doctor vanished as mysteriously as he had come, and Bill Plue, once more put to his own devices for making a living, turned to baskets and roof boards. For making the boards he would pick straight-grained, smooth-bodied red oaks; and chopping their bodies into yard lengths, he would roll the chunks to a pronged stand, and with a broad-bladed hand-axe split them into clapboards; then he sold the clapboards to country people who built roofs of them. For making the baskets, Bill used strips of sapbark of post oak and shaped handles and braces from freshly cut hickory. Basket-making he found a hard trade, teeming with misfittings and failures to sell.

Yet baskets brought him his first taking of domestic romance. One morning he had loaded a rounded dozen of them upon his shoulder and set forth Red Star ways, reckoning to peddle. He stopped first at the village store. There Merchant Mullinix gave appraising notice to his wares and offered him two dollars in trade for the whole lot. Bill was just at the point of accepting when he remembered that making the lot had involved seven hard weeks of labor. So he declined with a turn of nonchalance and set forth to peddle. Small change was scarce and the hill wives were in no mood to buy, and it was in the course of his last fruitless round that he came upon Gladys, his first real knowing of womankind.

Gladys was a lady of joy come from a zinc town in an

adjoining state. She had journeyed to the hills to rest, but a first lonely fortnight had brought her once more to the stage of vagaries and romantic yearnings. So Bill called at her slab-board retreat and the two lived together for a span of ten days. At the end of that time Bill left the baskets with the storekeeper and took the woman home with him, reckoning to live with her as man and wife.

So they did live for the whole of a lean year. For a time Gladys found delight in the silence and virile earthiness of the open woods. Then bit by bit she grew pensive and impatient and bitter, tiring of the stench and petulance of Bill's invalid mother, the communal fare of wild honey and sour biscuits and sow's belly, the lolling monotony, the ever-lasting stillness.

In late August a son was born to them, a child of forest vagaries and unfettered passion. Bill built a new shed to his cabin, bought infant accoutrements at the crossroads store and spent the last cold dollar of his timber money for the hire of a countryside midwife. Gladys barely survived the ordeal of childbirth, and her recovery was slow, holding through dull torturesome weeks.

When another summer came Gladys was taken with a quick seizure of wanderlust. One day she strayed away and failed to come back. But she left Bill their son, bountiful consolation for all her wreckage of his mad chariot of dreams.

The next year saw the coming of the railroad—which created a market for tens of thousands of white oak cross-ties. So Bill turned tie-cutter, felled young white oaks by the regal score and hewed them to ties destined to underlie winding miles of steel rails. Working from dawn to sunset, Bill could generally clear three ties, and sometimes when the breaks of luck were with him, four. Forty-seven cents apiece the ties brought, and nine cents more for hauling. And the market held through two prospering years. Bill stayed close with the labor, seeking consolation from hard work.

When he had put by sufficient savings, he took his mother away to a town sanitarium, so that she might profit from the craft and learning of science doctors. But the change served as a breaking straw. The old one grieved for her hills, and at the end of five purse-emptying weeks she died.

Bill provided for the burial, then returned to his chopping. It was then that the forest man came to be called Old Bill, for all in a season his hair showed streaks of gray, his muscles grew gnarled and ungiving, and his pace was come upon with a mature weightiness. As the seasons followed, the timber man took increasing delight in his son, Young Bill, who took after his father so closely that following him he appeared like a mincing dwarf.

The tie market waned, then died. Five lean years Old Bill spent at chopping cord wood for Tam's lime

kiln. Then a hardwood lumber mill located at Red Star and he took a job as grader, and so wandered through far turnings of hills, spotting and sorting and measuring oak timber. The first mill died, then a new one rose and died and a third worked the same location.

Old Bill has stayed a grader through the better part of half a century, albeit the hardwood trade has changed no less than a dozen times. Young Bill grew up, took in two terms at the Red Star school, then graduated to work in Hoogan's mill where he showed decided aptitude. Old Bill was proud.

One fall the lad left on a long selling trip; and when the date for his homecoming arrived, a letter came in place of the boy, which told, when duly interpreted by the foreman, that Young Bill had taken a job in a great lumber mill far off in the western mountains where the future was bright like a winter sunrise.

Young Bill never returned. Old Bill is still proud and so is all the Red Star countryside, proud to have raised up so great a timber man.

Now Old Bill Plue is an old man among old men a generation his junior. Not all the days are kind to him. Agues and internal rumblings come upon him sometimes. His teeth have rotted away. There are intervals of weeks when, incapacitated for labor, he can only sit and whittle and daydream.

Although his shoulders are bent beneath the weight of

heavy labor and piling years and his limbs are roughened and gnarled like dwarf post oaks, still his reckoning is sound, his vision is clear, and he still knows the ways of the woods. And food and drink are good to Old Bill. Sleep gives him comforting rest.

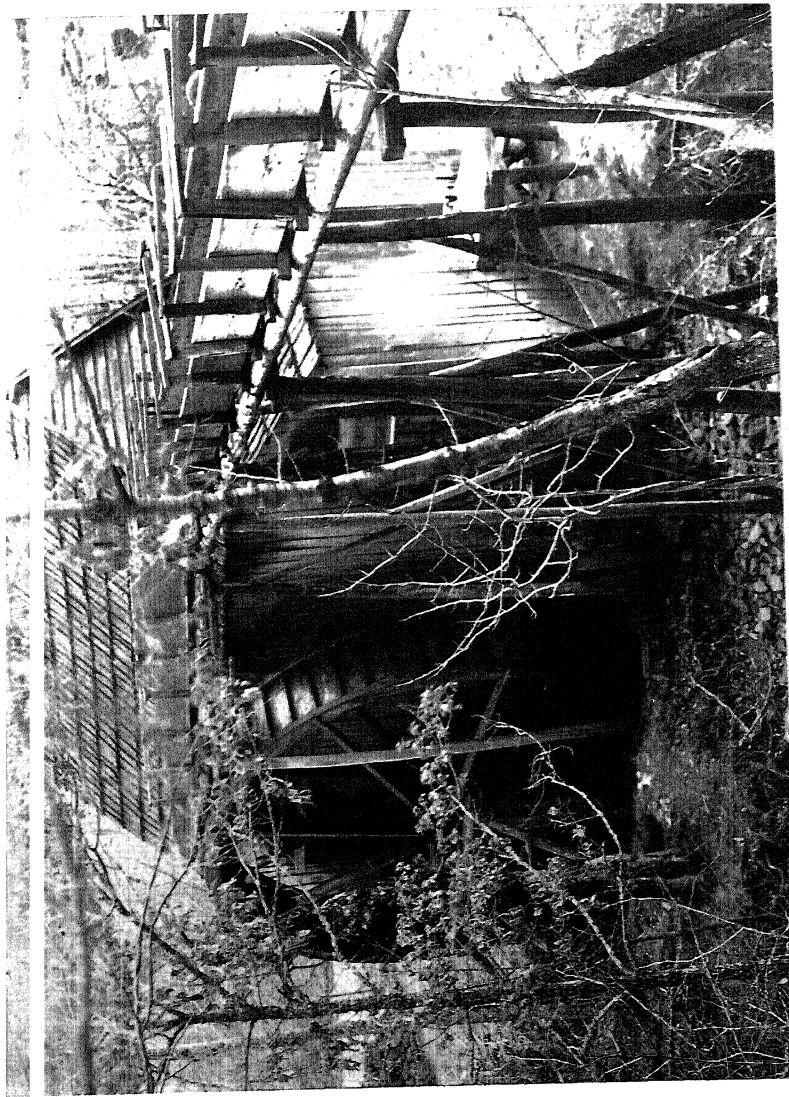
It is strange about water mills—their leisurely obliviousness to time. In many a remote stretch of backwoods America old-time mills continue to grind their countryside's grain. Century-old water wheels still turn. Clapboard roofs shed autumn rains and log-built dams hold against the riotous surge of spring freshets and summer floods.

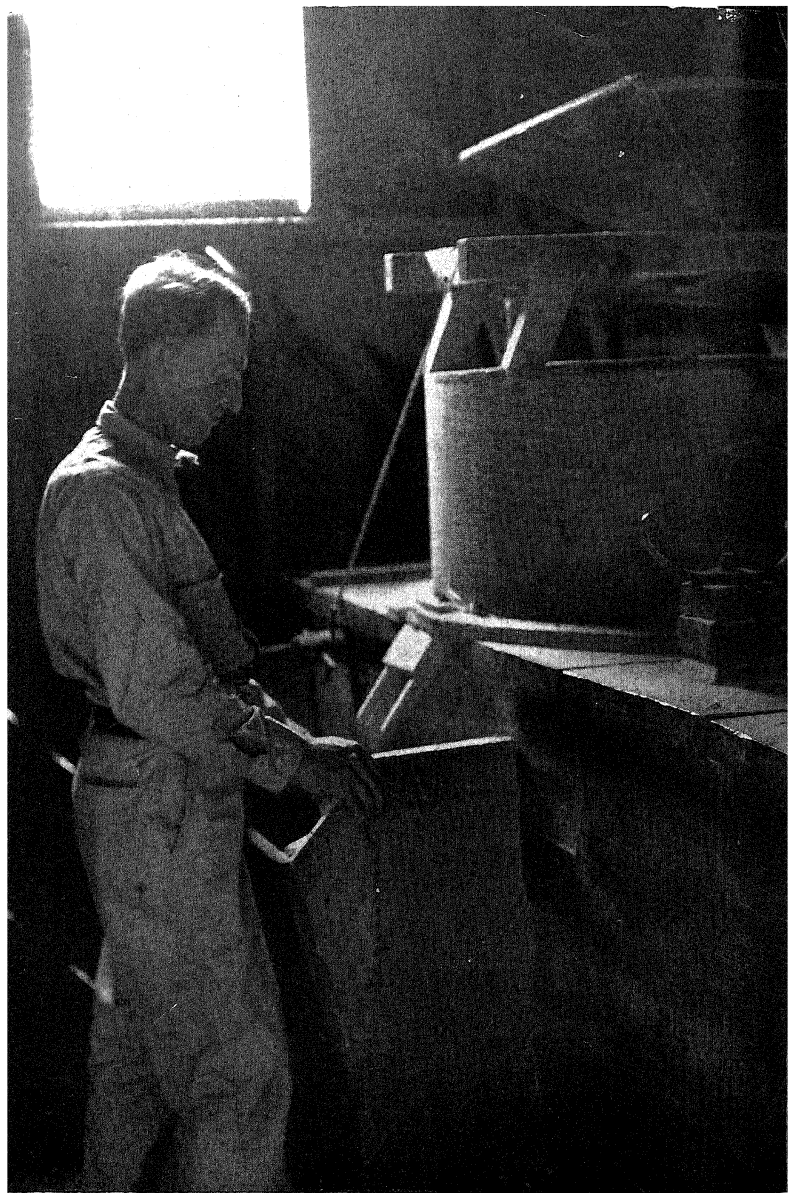
New bags of grain rattle down into old hoppers. New generations of millers work their trade and measure their toll. Men die and ambitions fade. But mill wheels turn on, floundering and splashing before the joyous urge of their ever youthful rivers.

The other day I ran across such a mill out in the hills of Northwest Arkansas, a mill which has been grinding for better than ninety years. Hawkins Mill was built in 1836, and the original building stays with little change. The framework is of hand-hewn white-oak, dovetailed and spiked with yellow poplar. The roof is made of red-oak clapboards and the floor is of puncheon-hewn logs. The foundation is a masterpiece in dry masonry.

The predecessor of Hawkins' water mill was a pestle

IN MANY A RE-
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NEW GRAIN RATTLES DOWN INTO OLD HOPPERS

mill operated at the same site by Old Jim Hawkins, grandfather of the present miller. In building that embryo of a mill, a forked pole was driven into the ground at the head of a high rapid and a long pole placed in the Y of the fork. On the lower end of the pole there was fastened lengthwise to the current a water trough, open at the upper end, the lower end blocked. In the high end of the pole was hinged a "pestle," a block of tough hickory.

The pestle block worked up and down. Underneath the pestle block was set a fat chunk of wood with a liberal-sized basin scooped in the top of it. The basin held shelled corn. The water trough, on becoming full, would lower the downhill end of the balance pole, raise the suspended pestle, then empty itself, whereupon the high end of the balance pole would be lowered and the pestle block would fall head foremost into the basin of shelled corn, and so the trough would be set to fill again. And when the trough was duly filled, then the pestle block would rise.

With conditions favorable, such a mill might crush as much as half a bushel of corn in the course of a single night.

One night a wandering raccoon ventured to taste of the corn. But the marauder lingered too long, and so the pestle crashed down upon him, with the result that the 'coon was flattened out like the proverbial cocked hat.

Next morning when Old Jim Hawkins strolled out to sack his grinding, he found a not very appetizing conglomerate of corn meal and 'coon pulp. That minor catastrophe moved Old Jim to build his water mill, and his building has outlived three generations of men.

Young Jim Hawkins, who keeps the mill now, told me of grinding ways still more primitive.

"Never heered tell of a tree mortar?

"Well, folks used to burn out a hole in the face of a good-sized stump and scrape clean the burnin'. Then they'd bend over a hickory sapplin' nearabouts and tie a pestle block to hit's top. When they'd pull down the pestle, hit would pound the corn in the mortar and the hickory sapplin' would spring back ready to pound down again.

"Yes, hit was slow. Thataway a man earned his bread.

"Old-timers used to make gunpowder in them kinds of mortars, too. They'd scrape saltpeter out'n caves and burn red-bud timber for charcoal, and pound 'em up together and mix in some brimstone. Then they'd wet the mixin' down with a little water and run hit through a sieve and then dry hit out. A hard-workin' feller could make just about ten pounds of gunpowder in a week's work.

"I'll bet you never seen a tub mill, neither.

"Back in the old days when a man lived on the prong of a branch where the water was lasty with a right con-

siderable trickle all the time, he'd oftentime put him in a tub mill.

"What was that like? Well, you take a good oak log and hew hit down till hit's sort of tub-shaped, with a long spindle-handle risin' right out'n the midst of hit. Run your water in a trough so hit'll hit and turn the tub, and as fast as the tub turns, why of course the spindle hit'll turn, too. Then you fasten a grindin' stone about the spindle and there's the mill.

"In the old days folks had to make their own mills. Even if they'd a-had the money to buy tricks and fixin's with, they couldn't have brung 'em up in the hills. In them days a man could fetch up jest what he could pack hossback. They ain't much of a road yit."

Hand pestles, crank mills, and pummel rocks all were costly in elbow grease. So water mills came and water mills have stayed.

XVI

BURIED TREASURE

"THEY'S GOLD in them hills!"

Spanish gold, silver and diamonds from old Mexico; doubloons, pieces-of-eight, and moonshiner's money—buried bullion, miser's money, rich ore veins, pearls and turquoise, maybe a Madonna of solid gold—wealth and adventure, both for the digging.

Time is plentiful in poor hill sections. Harvests come, seasons fade, and generations go their way. But treasure hunters in patched blue overalls and hickory work-shirts still swing their picks and wield their shovels. Weather-beaten men still study tattered and mildewed maps, follow up rock gulleys, peer into crevices, prowls in caves heavy with the clays of dead centuries, make down meandering streams and explore underground rivers, confident that some day they will blunder upon the protruding end of an iron-bound chest too heavy for one lone man to lift.

Occasionally the lost is found. Now and then one hears of rich strikes and lucky caches—of hearthstones which hide modest fortunes, of signal rocks which block the way

to a king's treasure. The findings are few and the failures many. But still the searchers keep intermittently at the quest.

The treasure lore of the Arkansas hills falls generally into three kinds: stories of foreign wealth, conquest, and piracy; stories of highwaymen and desperadoes; and chronicles of misers and the burying of private fortunes.

Spanish gold is a theme much prevalent. The yarns usually date back to the days of privateers and of Spain's conquest of the New World. Legends of Spanish gold tend to follow a recurring formula: the Indians have been mining precious metal in their own aboriginal way. The Spaniards came with much gold already and a blood-spilling thirst for more. The Spaniards capture the Indians' mines and enslave the native holders.

But presently the conquistadors begin to suffer a reverse in fortune. Pestilence comes. They are taken down with raging malarial fevers. The fates grimace. Neighboring Indians are hostile. Supplies of food and ammunition run low. So the Spaniards leave, bedraggled, bespattered, and generally harassed. But first they bury their ill-gotten cache, bury it deep, set marker trails and draw maps so that they can reclaim the treasure at a more favorable time. Then they do away with the enslaved Indians, murder them and toss their bodies into convenient shafts, after which they flee in great haste. And for some reason or other they never come back.

Pioneers come to claim hillside homesteads. Years pass. In time mysterious leathery-looking strangers begin to appear, outlanders, wealth-tracers, men of silence and stealth. They stroll out among the backhills, locate strange carved rocks, blaze marked trails through mist-filled forests, and follow down ways of romantic yesterdays. Then they go away, and the hills continue to keep their secrets.

The homesteaders take up the quest for treasure and their sons and grandsons and great-grandsons keep up the search. Sane and substantial hillfolk still turn their spare hours and days to digging after Spanish gold. And who knows? There may be gold in them hills.

The hills hold innumerable tales of wealth more recently acquired. Moonshiners have long been a high-handed race of romancers, and in the early days a few of them were counterfeiters as well. I once knew an up-country entrepreneur who in his old age became stricken with rheumatism. He couldn't understand the logic of the dire visitation. He studied over his past life for grounds of justification and found none.

"Sonny," he wailed, "I ain't never done nothin' off color, unless maybe it was to run off a few kegs of sour licker and maybe a couple gallons of lead dollars."

There are stories of horse thieves and cattle rustlers who buried gold, men of mystery and might who were prone to keep within the caves. Caves gave them sheltered re-

treats and easy fortification. Caves abound in secret channels and passages, to the world outside known not at all. And even gold cannot glitter in their stygian darkness. Rustling is ended now, but the recollections linger on. So, also, do the fireside yarns of rustlers, and so perhaps, do their caches of silver dollars and greenbacks.

Then came the Civil War, when the hills were torn by family hates and clan feuds. Brute strength and the effort to survive were the only law. The substantial manhood of the hills joined in with the warring armies. The old-timers and stay-at-homes had little alternative other than to hide their savings. So it came about that a majority of the old homesteads acquired their own private traditions of buried treasure. Some of it was recovered when peace and neighborliness came again to the country.

But a majority of the fighting men never came back. Old-timers died. First homesteads were abandoned to sumac and fennel and brush thickets. Savings stayed buried. Reconstruction brought renewed hatred and violence. Highwaymen then held sway in the isolated hills, oppressing and pillaging and secreting. And when the bandits were gone and a second peace had come, holdings and hoardings were likely increased.

There are still other stories of treasure privately hoarded and hidden. A good portion of the hillfolk remain distrustful of banks and money-handlers. They do not invariably accept the idea of mixing their savings

in with those of thousands of others; of passing over their good silver and greenbacks in exchange for a slip of scribbled paper. It is not improbable that recent failure of thousands of small banks will motivate an almost interminable sequence of renewed money-buryings, which will, in turn, result in a new era of treasure tellings.

Many of the hill people continue to bury their savings. Tales of buried treasure hold the advantage of occasional verification. Fortunes have been turned up by a plough-share; buckets of gold have been known to answer the swing of a pick, or the jab of the spade, or the stroke of a stone-mason's hammer.

Here is a tale of gold honorably buried and honorably found. The place was near the site of Hawkins' mill, in Madison County, Arkansas.

Jim Hawkins came as a homesteader and proved himself an enterprising pioneer and a powerful one. He acquired three rich valley farms and manned them with slaves. He built the first water mill ever known in his part of the world, built it of hewn white oak logs floored with puncheon and roofed with hand-rived clapboards. The mill still stands.

Jim Hawkins had an eye for thrift. He planted his land in corn and wheat and cotton and fruit trees. Then he built a still immediately below the mill. The grain he ground into whiskey mash, and having distilled the whiskey he supported enormous herds of hogs with the

mash. With the fruit from his orchard he made brandies. Still farther down the creek he built a carding mill for seeding cotton and carding wool.

All went well enough. When the old uplander had rounded off his three score years and ten, and had thrown in a few decades for good measure, his daughter Mattie took over the properties and homestead.

Her years passed easily as the run of a sleepy river. The farms went to brush, the orchards died, but the countryside remained much the same, and the years were kind.

Aunt Mattie Lynn died not many years ago. When her funeral services were ended, the neighbor people from over about Gander Creek came down to do clearing out about the old place, since it was soon to be occupied by a still younger generation of the clan. There was considerable brush grubbing to be done, the roof needed patching, and the old fireplace needed refitting.

When they got around to the fireplace they reckoned to begin by taking up the old hearth and laying a new one. Smaller stones gave way readily enough, but the center rock was persistent. It was thick and firmly set. They slipped an iron rod to it, but the pry bent like a strip of wax. They fetched out a pair of crowbars and tried again. Four husky men strained at the pry. Bit by bit the hearthstone surrendered. Inch by inch the near edge rose higher. Then over it came.

Young Clyde Hawkins scooped aside a handful of soot. Then his fingers touched cold steel. He swept aside a layer of finely sifted ashes and dug his fingers into a steel loop. He grasped it, pulled hard, and so drew out a time-battered strong box. Countrymen fetched hammers and chisels. They broke the lock and pried the lid.

Inside there was gold—eagles and double-eagles, and strange coins without date or name, coins garnished with neat bundles of greenbacks—in all about eleven thousand dollars.

Hill men thereabouts are still looking for the “balance” of the Hawkins treasure. Some day they may find it. Or perhaps Mother Earth will claim the rest as her own.

XVII

FRONTIERSMAN—NEW STYLE

IT WAS A rainy day in the hills. The hotel-mistress, having served me princely fare, abandoned a dissertation on correct squirrel cooking when I told her that I was headed towards Plumlee, beyond Sherman Mountain, that I figured the Ozarks of Northwestern Arkansas to be a logical scene for searching after a typical section of the far-reaching and invincible American frontier.

"I know Ted Richmond who is homesteading down on Buffalo Shelf. I figured maybe I'd drop in on him."

The innkeeper folded her arms and eyed me diagonally,

"On a day like this 'drop in' is probably what you'll do—up on Sherman Mountain."

I took new courage along with a final helping of fried chicken.

"I've heard there's a road up Sherman Mountain as far as Plumlee. Might be I could drive that far, and go the rest of the way afoot."

My hostess gave pointed advice,

"If you do go, you'll have to take somebody along to

help you out of the mud. Might be you could get Alf Daley. He was born and raised up on them rims, and he knows 'em like a fox knows his den. Alfred lives and works over at the telephone office—that little house yonder with the wopajawed roof.”

I went in search of Alfred and found him professionally beset. Jasper, Arkansas, has its own telephone system with a grand total of thirty-seven telephones. Of these about twenty were temporarily out of the running. Alfred cranked away at the switch box, shouting salutations to backbrush patrons, who for mechanical reasons were unable to return them. Finally Alfred slammed up his head set.

“Hell, why have telephones? I might as well go to the door and yell. I might really better. That way folks here in town could hear me.”

I confided my craving to visit the rim lands beyond Sherman Mountain. Alfred took kindly to my predicament.

“Reckon I might as well go with you. This time o’ year there’s not more than a dozen phone calls a day here and not half of them get through. You wait till I get on some old boots.”

We started, and the day continued tearful. Lulu, my somewhat dim-witted coupé, moaned dismally as she changed from gravelled highway to the mountain byroad. For a spine-wrenching mile we alternately slid and spun.

Then it got worse. Alfred suggested that we get out and walk.

"This was really meant for walkin' anyhow. About the only one that uses the road regular is the mail carrier. Sometimes he rides mule-back, but generally he walks."

We buttoned our coats tightly and stepped forth, following a footpath that would have been discouraging to a mountain goat. Rain piled down in silvery cascades. The trail led through giant oak forests that have never been molested by axe; through sheltered ravines where grass stayed green and late wild flowers waved defiance to all prospects of winter. Finally as I wiped the rain from my eyes for the hundredth or so time, I saw my companion turn off the trail and vanish into an aged and decrepit log cabin.

I joined him on its narrow porch, which was enclosed with palings split from clear grained red oak, and a line of tubs and pans which were saving the rainfall. . . . I shed my water-logged coat with the observation that I was truly glad somebody had a house in those parts. Alfred was perplexed.

"You miss the idea. This here's a post office—a town."

Try as I did, I couldn't see any town. . . . Furthermore, I had never before visited a post office equipped with a cross-cut saw, a chopping axe, quilting frames, wool cards and strip-bottomed rocking chairs. When I asked further of the town, Alfred assured me that by *town* he

meant neighborhood. I inquired the neighborhood's limits.

"Countin' Hemmed-In Holler and the river valley, it's altogether about fifteen miles long and eighteen wide."

A hound dog bade us wistful welcome. Then the cabin door opened and a woman, white-haired and bent, strolled out. We traded views on the weather and I inquired if she were postmaster.

"No, sir, my Pa's postmaster. I just live here."

On learning our mission, the postmaster's daughter was reassuring.

"You-all might just set here in the dry. This here's Tuesday and Mr. Richmond generally always comes in after his mail Tuesday afternoon."

We entered the foreroom and took places before an amiable fire. The daughter was quilting. We begged that she suffer no interruption and settled ourselves beside a home-built table which held a worn family Bible, a copy of the postal code of the United States, and a government treatise on the care and cure of horses. Mud-chinked walls were adorned with a picture of Woodrow Wilson, a one-man bucksaw, a string of scarlet peppers, and a mimeographed notice to the effect that \$25,000 will be paid for evidence leading to the arrest and capture of the kidnapper of the Lindbergh baby.

We were roused by salutations from without. United

States mail was arriving. A lank mountain boy slipped down from a tall brown mule and tethered his transportation to the front gate. That done, he removed a saddlebag of mail, covered the saddle with his slicker, and hurried to the porch. The mule waited docilely, steam pouring from its laboring flanks.

When the mail-carrier came in, the ante-room door opened and the postmaster appeared. Uncle John Spencer, who is even ninety, felt well enough to attend to professional duties, which on that day included disposition of four postcards, two newspapers, and a farm magazine. The mail-carrier explained that he was about done with riding now that the fall rains had started, and that his route covered seventeen miles as the crow flies.

The postmaster, partly blind from his harvest of years, adjusted his steel-rimmed spectacles, peered at the incoming post, and deposited it in a well-locked closet.

True to prophecy, mail-bringing portended the arrival of James Theodore Richmond, frontiersman of 1934. Ted Richmond showed plainly his association with land. He was weather-browed, and clear of eye and complexion. His hands had lost the tell-tale softness of offices. His shoes and overalls gave added testimony of hard manual labor.

"Thanks for the shelter."

The postmaster of Plumlee studied me quizzically.

"You're plum welcome, young man. Don't say nothin'

about it. Their's queer people comes by here every now and then."

The three of us tramped forth, following a trail that led down a succession of excessively steep inclines and bluffs, known as rims. Ted Richmond showed us into his home, a two-room log cabin, home-built and furnished principally with the results of spontaneous home-carpentry.

"I came here because I wanted to be in a country that won't be spoiled by highways and filling stations and billboards. I believe this is one of those places. It's a frontier, and it'll never be anything else."

He pointed out a newly cleared field of rich, black earth.

"There's thirteen acres in that patch. I commenced clearing early enough to plant about five acres this summer—corn and strawberries and garden truck. Five acres ought to be enough to keep any cabin in victuals for the winter. There's one of the things that happened."

The far corner of the room held a basketful of turnips, any three of which would fill your hat. Then he fetched from the cellar a panful of potatoes, proportioned for the palates of giants. Talk turned from production to finance.

"I came here figuring to live on a hundred dollars a year. I've been settled a little more than a year now, and I've lived well enough—better on the whole than I was accustomed to doing in town on a lean salary. Up to date I've kept going on a trifle less than fifty dollars. I be-

lieve that a hundred dollars a year will give me a perfectly safe margin."

He lit his pipe and fell to kindling a fire.

"I figured that nowadays when about everybody except possibly Mr. Charles G. Dawes, until lately of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, is hard up, that a move of this kind is apt to be pretty safe play. I'm earning my own land here. I've built my own house, and I'm raising most of my own food. I'm keeping a cow and a family of pigs to help on.

"Understand, I don't say that mine is the only way. Homesteading is all right when you can get the right sort of land, but it's often-times economy and wise business to buy land. It's cheap now. Personally I believe in land. I believe that productive farmland is a solvent investment, now or any other time."

Ted Richmond shows genuine enthusiasm for his backwoods neighbors. Although living ways in the countryside have changed precious little during the past half-century, he finds his neighbors generally alert to the current world.

Shortly after his arrival at Plumlee, the newcomer set about organizing the first boy scout troop ever known in this particular neck of woods. The enterprise was quick to show promise. Word traveled from ridge to ridge, and twenty-one hill boys appeared at the first meeting—youngsters ranging in age from ten to nineteen years, a

sort healthy and straightforward and eagerly alert. Most of the scouts-to-be came afoot, a few by horseback.

So a strictly out-of-doors troop came into being, with a sworn policy to meet in the open and to indulge in some manner of tramp or exploration at each one of the bi-monthly gatherings. During the year none of the original personnel has been lost and half-a-dozen or so new members have been added. Each meeting has taken place in the open, and every gathering has found an interesting occupation—a hike, a venture into a mountain cave, study of birds or trees, a session of swimming or boat-building, of experiments at navigating the plunging waters of Big Buffalo Creek with home-built crafts.

The musterer declared with all frankness that he has never before worked with a more splendid cross-section of American youth; that he finds the backwoods youngsters unpretentious, quick-witted, and agile of body, refreshingly sincere and luckily rid of the common distractions of town.

When the wilderness scout troop was organized, Ted Richmond next set about to realize another hobby, a community library, reckoned to serve a countryside generally free of the companionship of books.

The homesteader acquired the library notion while in the Army. Following an injury in action, Richmond was assigned to special schooling at the University of Toulouse, following which he served on the editorial staff of

an A. E. F. service publication. When the sheet was suspended, its Doughboy staff voted to invest the accumulated profits towards opening a library at Toulouse, an institution reckoned to give current American literature to French readers. Ted Richmond had charge of the venture.

Having established himself in this far-flung Arkansas frontier, he set about organizing the first public library ever known in Newton County. He calls it the Wilderness Library, which is a fitting enough title. He housed his own first offering of books in a dry bluff shelter known in the rimlands as Robber's Cave.

Since no building was available at the time, Ted Richmond took hammer, saw, boards, and nails to the cave, built shelves there, fetched down his capital of books and sent forth word that the enterprise was open to all who might care to use it; that there would be no librarian on duty; that neighborhood people were welcome to go within, take whatever books they wanted and keep them until they were finished; that there were no fines or dues or obligations.

Rules and by-laws of the wilderness library stay the same. Only the location has changed. A cave is hardly the ideal site for a reading room, as you may have already surmised. Ted Richmond has now given over one room of his cabin to the books. The latch thereto hangs free and the stacks wait open and inviting, and the frontier

countryside is proving itself tremendously eager to take on the reading habit. The homesteading librarian testifies that the books are returned punctually and with unvarying honesty. He doesn't know of a single instance of theft. Volumes lost during the first year's run can be counted on the fingers of one hand. The library is growing, through processes of generous donation.

Towards sunset the rain slackened; and having devised a supper of ham and eggs, butter and milk, and homemade bread, we tramped forth into the autumn twilight to make a closer investigation of the holding, and to begin studying at closer range this particular stretch of surviving frontier.

The countryside has one non-sectarian church, a site of plain-spoken and informal worship. There is no salaried preacher. Three land-owning farmers alternate as pastors, and anyone who feels the urge, is welcome to supplement. The countryside school, which occupies the church house, is kept by another agrarian named Sherman Ham, who teaches a roomful of backbrush scholars, ranging in age from five to twenty-five years and subdivided into seven grades. The school is supported by village and non-resident tuition, the latter payable principally in firewood.

We proceeded to visit several homes thereabouts and found them generally possessed of dignity and cleanliness

and grace. Although farmable land is about on every side, this community of lost frontiers is one of modest-sized farms, cleared and tilled with the underlying notion of self-sufficiency.

Once an upbrush neighbor, Sam Newcomb, cleared a really big farm on a high hillside. Dame Nature appeared peeved at the presumption. One wintry day Sam came home to find that he had no farm. In the course of an afternoon's checker-playing a landslide had taken place. About a fourth of the mountainside, Sam's farm and cabin included, decided to move a few hundred yards nearer the equator. It did, and Sam never could quite figure out which land was his own, or exactly what was up and what was down.

Ted Richmond finds his neighbor people possessors of magnificent versatility engendered through a great agricultural heritage; agrarians of manifold avocations—farmers, wood-cutters, hunters, cobblers, carpenters, fence-builders, traders, butchers, salesmen or mechanics as the need of the season requires; while farm wives are likewise housekeepers, cooks, nurses, dressmakers, wash women, milk maids, and frequently enough field workers, in all a people willing to stake their lives upon the nurturing earth, giving labor and sweat in return for modest support. Livings are easily made, but accumulations of wealth are hard and slow to acquire. Genuine democracy is everywhere apparent.

After we had returned from the evening's pilgrimage and built up a convivial fire, Ted Richmond handed me a sheet of paper, weather-browned and blurred from exposure to rain. It was an auction notice for properties belonging to a neighbor man who had lately died, without leaving heirs.

"This is my idea of an authentic inventory of frontier capital."

The accounting read:

1 tub dish and kitchen pots
1 cider press
2 highboys, 3 tables and 4 beds complete
1 lot hog meat
7 bundles new oak boards
1 mare with colt
1 milk cow
1 scythe
1 cook stove
1 sow with litter of 6 pigs
1 fair-sized crib of corn
17 bales good hay
120 bundles oats

"Simple annals of the deserving poor."

"Pathetic in a way."

Ted Richmond nodded.

"Yes, in a way it is. Then again it isn't. This man lived long and well. He stayed with the land he was born

and raised on. He was good to life, and life was good to him.

“Of course his worldly goods aren’t worth much on the market—not as much, likely, as the price of one city theatre party, or a speak-easy sojourn, or one evening at a night club. But that wouldn’t have worried him. Out here anybody learns right off that money and property are secondary to good living. Town folks have the habit of talking about standards of living, when what they really mean is standards of buying, or standards of industrial consumption. The two aren’t the same—by a whole lot. We figure that a man who owns a patch of ground that can grow food for himself and his family and give a margin for a few plain clothes and a little recreation, can never be very poor.”

We talked more of primitive finance. Ted Richmond allows personally that any able-bodied man with a plot of tillable land ought to be able to get along, even with a fair-sized family, on a hundred dollars a year in cash money.

His reckonings of buyable necessities—personal—include:

Clothing: Three pairs of overalls a year; six shirts; one pair work shoes and one pair Sunday shoes; a Sunday suit—good for three years; an overcoat—good for five years; a hat, cap, and two pairs of work gloves each year; underwear; toilet articles in quantities requisite.

Food, he allows, should be home-grown. A surplus of butter or eggs, or pork meat, or lard, or firewood, should be swapped for such extra staples as sugar, coffee, flavorings, soda, salt, baking powder, chinaware and cutlery. Home-grown wheat and corn can be ground at a countryside mill, and the grinding charge paid in toll. Tools and machinery parts and incidental hardware should stay within fifteen to twenty dollars a year.

Among luxuries he suggests three or four good books a year, a magazine or two, a daily and a county newspaper, an occasional journeying to a nearby town, a vacation in the form of a two or three week tramping trip.

"Still, it's what you get that counts—not the amount of money you pay for it. I've never known any people who got as much of just plain living as these folks do."

During the days that followed, I was come upon with increasing conviction that Plumlee and its countryside is typical of the surviving American frontier; of our realms of hills and forests, mountains and mesas, our waiting "marginal" lands, of large sections of at least forty of our forty-eight states.

Ted Richmond reckons that the term "frontier" has two principal connotations: first, the fact of an abundance of cheap and unoccupied land; second, the willingness on the part of a good share of the citizenry to make use of and cherish such land. Accordingly Ted Richmond be-

lieves that the American frontier, while far less extensive, is as real and tangible in 1934 as it was in 1834.

"Understand I'm not promoting a landward trend of population. I'm not an economist, not a statistics juggler. Frontiering, or farm-taking, or whatever you want to call it, is a matter for the individual to decide. It's mainly an issue between him and the earth he plans to use. But it's the finest life I've ever run on to. I believe about three Americans out of four would feel the same way about it, if they gave it a fair try-out. Maybe I'm wrong. That's what I believe."

And that is what I believe.

Outside, a rising west wind lifted brittle scurryings of dead leaves. A swaying oak branch scraped lightly against the clapboard roof. Alfred, the neighbor boy who had been lured away to the high commerce of telephony, dozed. The open fire wavered, as increasing feebleness came upon it. Frontier bedtime was at hand. We made ready for sleep.

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